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The 2005 Iraqi Sunni Awakening: The Role of the Desert Protectors Program

William Knarr
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On the cover. Desert Protectors victory celebration post-Operation Steel Curtain in Al Qaim, November 2005. Written on the right as you are looking at the photo: "The heroes who liberated/freed Al Qaim," and on the left: "Long live Iraq". It is a celebration honoring the heroes of the Awakening. Photo courtesy of Major Mukhlis Shadhan Ibrahim al-Mahalawi.

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Foreword

Most popular narratives of the Awakening in Iraq, the partnering of the Sunni Tribes with the Coalition and Government of Iraq (GOI) to fight al-Qaeda, associate the beginning of the movement with Sheikh Sattar Albu-Risha's 14 September 2006 proclamation in Ramadi, where he coined the term *Al Sahawa*. However, Dr. William Knarr contends that the Anbar Awakening, as a movement, started 12 months prior to the proclamation in the northwest of Al Anbar, in Al Qaim District along the Syrian/Iraqi border. The Albu-Mahal tribe initially sided with al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) to fight the Coalition forces. But it soon became apparent that AQI was the real enemy as they implemented their own extreme version of Sharia, Islamic law, and sought to eliminate tribal influence and destroy the social fabric of the province. The Albu-Mahal, in what would become a fight for survival, realized they could not fight AQI on their own and pleaded for help from the Coalition and the GOI. The foundation for developing that partnership was a little known program called the "Desert Protectors." The Desert Protectors were local tribesmen who were recruited, trained, organized, and deployed as scouts under the watchful eye and guidance of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) in Iraq.

Dr. Knarr tells the story of *Al Sahawa*, the Awakening, from a different perspective. Rather than the beginning of the movement, the 2006 awakening in Ramadi resulted from an accumulation of efforts; it was part of a sequence of events and local awakenings that started in 2005 in Al Qaim with the employment of the Desert Protectors. Although the Desert Protectors tactical successes were limited, program implications were much greater. Conceptually and creatively, the program was the first GOI and Coalition sanctioned approach linking the use of the tribes for local security to the legitimacy of the national government. Until that time the policy was to work through government institutions; working through the tribes was seen as arming militias. However, Iraqi society had degenerated to such a point that most of the government institutions, especially at the local level, did not exist. The program marked a policy and mindset change in dealing with the tribes that had implications at all levels of war.

Although Special Operations Forces (SOF) were central to the start of the program, the involvement of all echelons—Coalition and Iraqi, conventional forces as well as SOF, was critical to bridging the gap between the tactical and strategic. In particular, it was SOF's hallmark "by, with, and through" approach that capitalized on the indigenous population to fight for their freedoms from the brutality of al-Qaeda and its use by conventional forces to help set the conditions for the Awakening.

The development of the Desert Protectors on the Awakening movement in 2005 has tremendous lessons for today as a newly formed Coalition organizes to fight the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, an outgrowth of AQI. In particular, legitimacy of the government was, and is, critical. That legitimacy is based on the population's belief that the government is looking out for their welfare.

Kenneth H. Poole, Ed.D.
Director, Center for Special Operations Studies and Research

About the Author

D r. William (Bill) Knarr serves as a Senior Fellow at the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) in Tampa, Florida, where he supports their research and publications program and teaches/leads seminars on irregular warfare. He is also an Adjunct Research Staff member with the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), Alexandria, Virginia, where he is leading a project on counterinsurgency (COIN) initiatives for training and education. He is also the owner of KAPELC Limited Liability Company that specializes in active, participatory learning and case study development. Prior to joining IDA and JSOU, Dr. Knarr served in the U.S. Army, retiring as a colonel in 2002. He has a doctorate in Education, master's degrees in National Security Strategy and Systems Management, and a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics. His military education includes the National War College.

Dr. Knarr was a Resident Senior Fellow at JSOU (September 2011 to November 2014) through Booz Allen Hamilton (and previously SAIC). He supported the JSOU research and publication program and taught seminars in irregular warfare, national security, counterinsurgency, unconventional warfare, information operations, learning methods, and theory. In 2014 he was the JSOU project leader for studying the integration of women into small elite Special Operations Forces teams. In June 2013, as a member of a research team, he visited Afghanistan to assess the sustainability of the Afghan Local Police, a program integral to transitioning security responsibilities to that country. Additionally, he supported JSOU executive events, symposia, and senior-level JPME.

Dr. Knarr was a resident project leader in the Joint Advanced Warfighting Division, IDA, from 2002 to 2011. While at IDA he managed studies and analysis programs to support the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Staff, and Combatant Command programs focusing on lessons learned, training, and education. His IDA studies and publications are listed below.

The "Al Anbar Awakening" documented the Iraqi tribal movement that partnered with the Coalition to fight Al Qaeda in Iraq and its lessons for

counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. Documenting the Iraqi perspective, his team interviewed tribal sheikhs, security forces, and Iraqi Government members such as former Prime Minister Al-Jaafari.

The "Fallujah Battle Reconstruction" project highlighted the importance of political-military dynamics, partnership development, and strategic communications. His team conducted site surveys in Fallujah and interviews from the tactical to the strategic level, including former Prime Minister Allawi and General Casey. *Seizing the Peninsula, a Vignette from the Battle for Fallujah: An Education and Training Resource*, was released to JPME institutes in 2011.

Mazar-e Sharif: First Victory of the 21st Century, 2010, highlights the power of small adaptable units leveraging joint/coalition capabilities and working "by, with, and through" indigenous forces in Afghanistan. The material is being used at JPME institutes and is sponsored on the Joint Staff Website at: http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jointpub_capstone.htm.

Dr. Knarr's Army operational experience included intelligence, aviation and special operations. His last duty assignments included: the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Systems Manager for Unmanned Aerial Systems and Aerial Common Sensor from 1997 to 2002 and Commander, Joint Intelligence Center, USSOCOM, 1996 to 1997.

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The author would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the History division of Marine Corps University for opening their files and discussing their research on the Anbar Awakening. Their two-volume *Anbar Awakening Anthology* set a high standard and is one of the most credible and complete published works to date on the subject.

Special thanks to Command Sergeant Major David Betz, U.S. Army, retired, for his support, and to Colonel Frank Sobchak, U.S. Army, for his assistance and discussions in reconciling some of the concepts within this paper.

Introduction

On 2 May 2005, Chief of Police Major Ahmed Adiya Asaf was walking along Main Street in the market area of Husaybah, a town in Al Qaim district of northwestern Iraq, when seven men attacked, shot, and beheaded him.[1] For the people of the Albu-Mahal tribe, the beheading of Major Ahmed was the last straw—the Albu-Mahal would be the first tribe to stage a significant uprising against al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Although the term *Al Sahawa*, the Awakening, would not be coined until 12 months later, the movement started in Al Qaim with the partnership between the tribe, the Coalition, and the Government of Iraq (GOI) to fight AQI.[2] The foundation for that partnership was a little known program called the "Desert Protectors." The Desert Protectors were local tribesmen: recruited, trained, organized, and deployed as scouts under the watchful eye and guidance of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) in Iraq.

Purpose and approach

Most popular narratives of the Awakening in Iraq—the partnering of the Sunni Tribes with the Coalition and Government of Iraq to fight al-Qaeda—associate the beginning of the movement with Sheikh Sattar Albu-Risha's 14 September 2006 proclamation in Ramadi, where he coined the term *Al Sahawa*. The purpose of this monograph is to tell the story of the Awakening in Al Anbar from a different perspective and with a different conclusion: that the Ramadi awakening resulted from an accumulation of efforts, and it was part of a sequence of events and one of many awakenings, not the start of the movement. In doing so it contends the following:

1. The Awakening movement within Al Anbar, the partnering of the Sunni tribes with the Coalition and the GOI to fight AQI, started in 2005 with the development of the Desert Protectors program in Al Qaim.

2. The Desert Protector program filled a niche. This was a Sunni tribesman's opportunity to join an Iraqi Armed Forces unit whose purpose was to fight for his community without the prospect of a near-term redeployment out of the area. This was especially true at a time when

local police either couldn't be hired or, if they were hired, couldn't survive. This is an important concept for the future fight against insurgencies.

3. The movement that started in Al Qaim was not "localized" as some would contend;[3] it was part of a larger movement that spread throughout Al Anbar and that the Ramadi awakening was a significant part of that effort—not the start of it. Iraqi perspectives and relationships are key to understanding the connection between those Anbar Awakening movements and events.[4]

The narrative, told primarily through interviews of the participants, both Coalition and Iraqi, provides lessons for the future and spans the strategic to the tactical. As an example, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari speaks of his reluctance in arming Sunni tribes. Dr. Sadun Dulaymi, the Minister of Defense, discusses working with the Coalition, the tribes, and the Prime Minister to develop the Desert Protectors as a legitimate Iraqi security force, allaying some of Jaafari's and General Casey's concerns. At the operational level, Colonel Kevin McDonnell, CJSOTF commander, relates his discussions with Lieutenant General John Vines, Multi-National Corps–Iraq (MNC-I) commander, in deploying SOF during the summer of 2005 to Al Anbar to capitalize on tribal dissatisfaction with AQI. At the tactical level the various SOF team members speak of the challenges engaging, and in some cases re-engaging the various tribes along the Euphrates, and in gaining Iraqi and Coalition support for the program. Additionally, the Desert Protectors speak of the satisfaction working with the Coalition and some of their frustrations working with the Iraqi Army and the GOI.

Although SOF were central to the start of the Desert Protectors program, the involvement of all echelons—Coalition and Iraqi, conventional as well as SOF—was critical to bridging the gap between the tactical and strategic. In particular, it was SOF's hallmark "by, with, and through" approach that capitalized on the indigenous population to fight for their freedoms from the brutality of al-Qaeda and its use by conventional forces to help set the conditions for the Awakening.

Background

Conditions in 2003, 2004, and early 2005 were not conducive to working with or through the tribes in Al Anbar (see map at Figure 1). At the strategic level, within the GOI there was paranoia of arming Sunni tribes; within the Coalition there was an unwritten policy discouraging Coalition forces of working with or through the tribes, preferring that they work directly with Iraqi government institutions instead. At the operational level, the CJSOTF and MNC-I had removed most Army Special Operations Forces from western Al Anbar in August 2004 to focus more on the threat in the Baghdad area. At the tactical level, this exodus from Al Anbar jeopardized the relationships SOF had developed with some of the tribes along the Euphrates, in particular the Albu-Nimr.
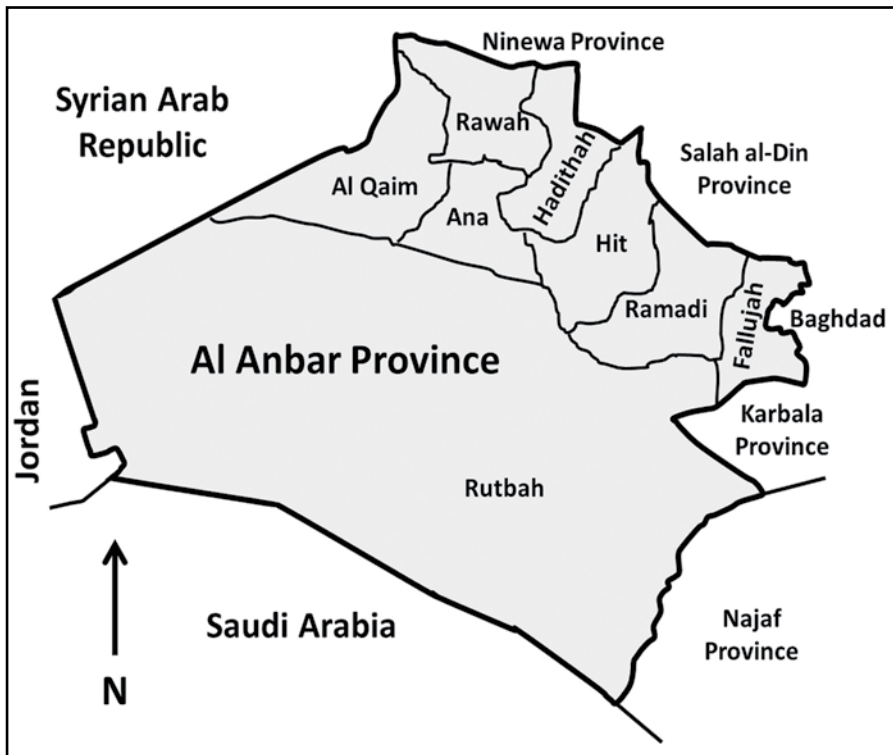
Figure 1. Al Anbar, Iraq and neighboring countries.
Source: USMC

The Anbar Awakening

What was the Anbar Awakening?[5] There are many opinions on the Anbar Awakening movement: descriptions, components, characterizations, starting points, contributors, etc. It is important that it be characterized up front, as it lies at the core of the narrative. Since Sheikh Sattar Albu-Risha coined the term it's only appropriate that this start with his characterization. Unfortunately, he was assassinated in 2007, so we relied on others who knew him to provide his characterization. According to Colonel Sean MacFarland, "[Sheikh Sattar] defined it as them [the Anbaris] awakening to the fact that the Coalition was their friend and that the true enemy were the *takfiri* extremists."[6] A slightly different version is provided by Andrew Lubin who quotes Sheikh Sattar as saying, "When the Americans came we thought they were our enemy. The Awakening came when we realized the Americans were our friends."[7] Although less eloquent, but to the point, Lieutenant Colonel Tony Deane recalls Sheikh Sattar's declaration in early September, before the 14 September 2006 public proclamation as, "We have come to join you in fighting al-Qaeda."[8]

Other characterizations include:

- Marine Corps University's *Al Anbar Anthology* generally described the Anbar Awakening as an "indigenous movement to partner with U.S. forces to rid the region of al-Qaeda …"[9]
- Sterling Jensen and Najim al-Jabouri characterized the Sunni Awakening as the "Iraqi revolt against al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) in which Sunni Arabs partnered with U.S. forces to fight a common enemy."[10]
- Mr. Mahmood al-Janabi, a former leader within the insurgent group, *Jaish al-Islami* (JAI), characterized it as recognition that "[We] started to realize that al-Qaeda posed a greater danger to Iraqi society than the Americans. So that's how we stood and fought against al-Qaeda and began to work with the Americans …"[11]

All of those characterizations share common components and generally say the same thing: The Awakening was the partnering of the Anbaris with the Coalition to fight AQI.

But specifically, what does it imply, include, and exclude? Implied in Sattar's characterization and stated in Al Anbar Council's proclamation was a presumption that the tribes and tribal sheikhs would lead and represent the

tribes. After all, the proclamation was signed by a council of 41 Al Anbar sheikhs and tribal leaders described as the "The awakening of Honorable Anbar Tribes." The first of the 11 proclamations was, "The return of [the] Honorable status of Sheikhs … to form the Anbar Sheikh Council."[12] There was also the statement that the terrorists were the enemy and an assumption that they, the tribes, were ready to resist or had resisted AQI.

Second, "that the Coalition was their friend," meant that they, the tribes, could/should partner with the Coalition to fight AQI. This was also reflected in the proclamation. This paper adds to that characterization with two more defining factors.

Third, most people think of the Awakening as an Iraqi phenomenon, although that was primarily the case, there was a Coalition component. In an interview with the author, General Allen describes the Anbar Awakening as several awakenings, one of which was "Our own awakening to the fact that there was the opportunity with the tribes …"[13] Sheikh Majed Abd al-Razzaq Ali al-Sulayman of the Dulaymi Confederation was much more blunt asserting that, "We [the Iraqis] were awake … it was the Americans that were not awake!"[14] Tribal engagement policies, albeit unwritten, were a critical part of the process and will be addressed in this monograph.

Fourth, most of the characterizations did not include the Iraqi government. Was that an oversight or purposeful? As there was a major distrust for the GOI and the GOI could provide them very little in terms of immediate resources, it was probably purposeful.[15] However, it was through the foresight and wisdom of people like Dr. Dulaymi, Colonel Sean MacFarland, and Brigadier General John Allen that the GOI was included as a major partner in the process. After all, the Coalition was going to leave Iraq and needed to wean the people off Coalition support and, from the beginning, needed to foster the "legitimacy" of the GOI in order to establish that linkage to the people.

This is not a judgment on whether those characterizations were right or wrong; it's simply, with the luxury of hindsight, being able to capitalize on other opinions and refine that characterization from a counterinsurgent perspective. So for the purpose of this monograph, the Anbar Awakening, to include those awakenings that resulted in the Awakening movement, is characterized as, "the partnering of the Sunni tribes with the Coalition and the GOI to fight AQI." It consists of four conditions, of which two and three may occur simultaneously or in reverse order.

1. The Iraqi people recognize that the *takfiris*/extremists (AQI) are the enemy.

2. The Iraqi people, as represented by the tribes are ready to resist, or have actively resisted against AQI, but recognize that the only way AQI can be beaten is for the Anbaris, like it or not, to partner with the Coalition.

3. The Coalition has to recognize this as an opportunity and be willing to work with the people; in most cases that meant working through or with the tribes.

4. The partnership must include the GOI. Fostering the legitimacy of the GOI and developing that connection between the GOI and the people was the fourth and, arguably, most difficult step.

When this monograph refers to an awakening movement, that movement includes all four of the above conditions/components.

Administrative notes

The following protocols are used in this paper for consistency: In text/context this paper will refer to military members by their rank at the time of the event. In the endnotes they will be referred to by their rank at the time of the interview. This monograph uses the upper case A and S to describe the overall Al Anbar Awakening movement or *Al Sahawa*, and the lower case a or s to describe those local movements to include the awakenings in Al Qaim, Baghdadi, or Ramadi. The term is used in relation to the movement and does not refer to the council, the political party or its evolution to Concerned Local Citizens or the Sons of Iraq.

For reference, Appendix A contains a "Who's Who" list of Iraqi interviewees relevant to this paper, along with other notables. This monograph relies on a multitude of Iraqi interviews and tries to provide the Iraqi perspective. After all, it was primarily an Iraq insurgency and an Iraqi Awakening. There are enough papers and books on the Iraqi insurgency and Iraqi Awakening written from a Coalition perspective.

The majority of tribal names begin with the term *albu*. Generally, when the tribal name is included in an individual's name, the prefix "al-" is added and the tribal name changes slightly, usually with the addition of awi or i at

the end. For example, Albu-Risha becomes al-Rishawi and al-Assafi denotes a member of the Assaf tribe or Albu-Assaf. This may be also used when referring to an individual's tribal affiliation.

For al-, Al-, or Al in a proper name: When "al" is in the middle of the name (in a last name, for example) it is lower-cased with a hyphen, such as Nuri al-Maliki. If the name is by itself then the "al" is either dropped or capitalized, as in Al Maliki, except for al-Qaeda, which is hyphenated with a lower case al throughout.

Unless indicated otherwise, this document normally defers to the USMC's *Al Anbar Anthology* for spellings and affiliations.

When speaking of strategy, this monograph uses a combination of the strategy framework and the levels of war. The strategy framework conceptually defines strategy as "the relationship among ends, ways, and means. Ends are the objectives or goals sought. Means are the resources available to pursue the objectives. And ways or methods are how one organizes and applies the resources."[16] This paper also uses the levels of war as described in Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, 11 August 2011, "Three levels of war—strategic, operational, and tactical—model the relationship between national objectives and tactical actions."[17]

Structure

This chapter provided the purpose, approach, and a short background for the monograph and characterized the Anbar Awakening. The structure of the rest of the monograph is as follows:

Chapter 1 describes the conditions in Iraq in 2003 and in particular the development of the insurgency, mostly from an Iraqi perspective.

Chapter 2 generally describes the year 2004 as a year of chaos and transitions as a new Iraqi Government is installed, the U.S. Embassy is established, and the MNF-I and MNC-I are activated to replace the much smaller and tactically oriented Combined Joint Task Force – 7 (CJTF-7). With the new team came a new strategy. The chapter addresses that strategy, to include engagement and reconciliation, as well as some of the early attempts to work with the tribes. It concludes by describing the effects the battles for Fallujah had on the rest of Al Anbar by the end of 2004.

Chapter 3 takes the reader to the Western Euphrates River Valley (WERV), called Area of Operations (AO) Denver. It briefly discusses previous

Coalition activities in the area and then focuses on operations in early 2005. Activities during the spring and summer of 2005 set the conditions for an awakening in Al Qaim.

Chapter 4 focuses on activities in Al Qaim and the Albu-Mahal's uprising against AQI. Additionally, the operational detachment alpha (ODA) had been withdrawn from Al Qaim in 2004 and would not be reintroduced until later in 2005 (in the next chapter).

Chapter 5 discusses the evolution of "engaging the tribes" and the development of the Desert Protectors program. This is probably one of the most important chapters because of those policy changes that encouraged working with the tribes and provided the mindset and a method for doing so. It also addresses the development and employment of the first Desert Protectors in Al Qaim.

Chapter 6 details SOF's work in the Corridor, primarily in the Hit District, with the Albu-Nimr tribe, one of the most influential Sunni tribes in Iraq.

Chapter 7 provides the rest of the Awakening story with events in Ramadi and discusses the relationships among events, suggesting that the movement in Ramadi in 2005 was a missed opportunity. It then addresses the three contentions listed in the purpose statement from page 1.

Chapter 8 provides the summary and conclusions.

1. 2003: The Growing Insurgency

Anumber of reports indicated that Anbaris were receptive to the Coalition when its forces entered Al Anbar Province in March 2003. According to Sheikh Majed Abd al-Razzaq Ali al-Sulayman, a principal Sheikh of the Dulaymi Confederation, that was not by accident. During pre-invasion meetings with U.S. Government representatives, Sheikh Majed was asked to help the Coalition enter Al Anbar and avoid conflicts with the Anbaris. He agreed, contacted tribal and military leaders in Al Anbar, and gained their support.[18] The Coalition's initial approach to engagement did not surprise the Anbaris. After all, when the British occupied Iraq after World War I, they installed a Sunni-dominated government, which had been the norm since the Ottomans' time in Iraq.[19] What did "shock" the Sunnis, however, was a series of post-invasion Coalition actions or inactions throughout the spring and summer of 2003 that changed what they thought was a generally peaceful coexistence. Although there are two sides to every story, the following discusses the expectations and underlying grievances for the insurgency from an Iraqi perspective. After all, whether the many Coalition accounts agree with the Iraqi perspective or not, it was their perspective, their reality, and their insurgency.

Coalition actions and inactions: An Iraqi perspective

The first major concern Iraqis mention was the Coalition's inability to create a minimum standard of security that included protecting the borders and controlling the looting and lawlessness. This included unsecured Iraqi ammunition storage areas. General Babikir Baderkhan Zibari, chief of staff and commanding general of the Iraqi Joint Forces, emphasized that this was a major "Coalition mistake," which would contribute to a growing insurgency and "come back to haunt the Americans."[20]

Mr. Mahmood al-Janabi, a former leader within the major insurgent group, *Jaish al-Islami* (JAI), similarly expressed his surprise and dismay at the lack of security.

> We thought that when the Americans invaded us they had come to remove Saddam Hussein. But we were shocked and astonished

to find out that the American Forces … were allowing thieves and looters to come to governmental factories and institutions … to loot them and then to burn them down.[21]

After inadequate security (not necessarily in this priority) Iraqis often cite top U.S. Administrator to Iraq Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority orders number one and two—the first calling for de-Ba'athification and the second dissolving the Iraqi Military—as significantly contributing to the insurgency. Dissolving the military and de-Ba'athification greatly increased the number of unemployed Iraqis, many of whom were Sunni and former military.

Additionally, the Sunnis felt it deceitful that the Coalition would come to the Anbaris for help to invade Iraq and then execute policies that would force a majority of the Anbaris, as Ba'athists and/or military, out of work. They would next install Shia expatriates, such as Ahmed Chalabi, to run the country.[22] Engineer Jalal al-Gaoud was baffled by this situation:

> All of a sudden they [Sunnis] see themselves being dislodged from their jobs and overnight two or three million people were thrown in the streets without salaries. On the other hand, Shia religious leadership and sectarian political parties with strong Iranian influence were on the helm of the new Iraqi government … Although we really tried to understand what was happening, we couldn't. It was too contradictory and did not make sense. Unfortunately, whenever we say that to the Americans, they smile and nod their heads.[23]

Similarly, Mullah Nathem al-Jabouri, former AQI member, added that many former Iraqi army soldiers joined the insurgency for financial reasons after they lost their jobs in the military. He added that they also joined to save and protect the Sunnis' identity. "The Sunnis accepted al-Qaeda, because they were scared by the thought of the influences of the Iranians … taking over."[24]

This, along with a perception of the Coalition's harsh and sometimes brutal treatment, which Iraqis attributed to ignorance or arrogance, created a population that was extremely susceptible to the influence of insurgents. Former Prime Minister Al Jaafari characterized the Coalition treatment of Iraqi citizens as soldier misconduct and provided examples:

The misconduct of some of the Coalition soldiers dealing with Iraqi citizens … it was an offensive way of dealing with people. The Coalition soldier would not condone any slight movement or any suspicious movement; right away he would point his weapon and shoot to kill.[25]

In contrast, according to Mullah Nathem, Anbaris joined al-Qaeda for a number of reasons. Al-Qaeda came as martyrs to fight for and save the Iraqis from the invaders; they came with the Islamic Sunni ideology and were accepted in the Sunni society. Some joined their ranks for financial reasons, former army members for example. Additionally, the Sunnis' fear of the Iranians prompted them to join arms with al-Qaeda.[26] As such, AQI promised Anbaris security, money, and a strong Sunni counterbalance to the rising Shia influence in the country.

From the perspective of many Iraqis, such Coalition actions, whether real or imputed, helped nurture the conditions for Iraqi unrest and disaffection with the Coalition. Simply being an occupier and not being Arabic and Muslim was enough justification for many Iraqis to bear arms against the Coalition. Then, de-Ba'athification and the dissolution of the Iraqi Army forced many Sunnis out of work. In addition to the loss of income, they felt disrespected. Compound that by the Iraqi perception of the Coalition's heavy-handed treatment of the Iraqis without apparent reason, and many were persuaded to oppose the Coalition.

Fallujah

When asked if one event might have fueled the insurgency more than others, a number of interviewees pointed to an incident on 28 April 2003 in the city of Fallujah. Responding to hostile small arms fire, Coalition forces, according to Iraqi reports, fired into a crowd of demonstrators, killing several people. Mr. Saif Rachman provided an Iraqi perspective:

From the Fallujans' perspective, they were having a peaceful demonstration at one of the schools in the city. U.S. Forces fired on the demonstrators and killed several of them. After that incident, things went sour. Al Anbar is a traditional tribal area with tribal law. Because the Fallujans felt that the U.S. military killed one of them, they were honor-bound to exact revenge.[27]

By the end of 2003, the Coalition faced a full-fledged insurgency comprising former regime elements, nationalists, and Islamic extremists. In the chaos, the criminal elements migrated to the groups that promised the most gain for the least risk.

2. 2004: A Year of Chaos, Transitions, and Condition-setting

The year 2004 has been described as one of chaos, transitions, and condition setting: Chaos as a result of the insurgency; transitions with the installation of an Interim Iraqi Government, establishment of the U.S. Embassy, and activation of the MNF-I and MNC-I to replace the much smaller, tactically oriented CJTF-7; and condition setting as the Coalition would eliminate insurgent safe havens in preparation for the January 2005 elections. Central to all of that was Fallujah.

Fallujah dominated the news from Al Anbar in 2004. By early 2004, Fallujah had become the center of insurgent activity. The first real indication of this occurred in February when General Abizaid decided to visit the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) and police headquarters in Fallujah. General Abizaid planned to walk the streets of Fallujah; but those plans were cancelled when insurgents opened fire on the police and ICDC headquarters. The next day, insurgents again attacked the police headquarters, freeing 100 prisoners and killing 23 policemen. Those police left alive were so demoralized by the attack they simply stopped coming to work or worse, began to work with the insurgents.[28]

In March 2004, insurgents in Fallujah killed four U.S. contractors. A local mob hanged the burned remains of two of the Americans from the old city bridge. The Coalition's abortive attempts designed, in part, "to make the insurgents pay" simply added influence, or *wasta*, to the insurgent's cause. It also signaled to the Iraqis and others in the region that the Americans could be "beaten." According to Dr. Mowaffak Rubai'e, the Iraqi National Security Advisor, Fallujah became a symbol of the insurgency.[29]

The security and political conditions in Iraq worsened throughout 2004. al-Qaeda's bombing of the Madrid commuter train system on 11 March resulted in Spain withdrawing from the Coalition in April. Honduras soon followed. Almost simultaneously was the revelation of criminal abuse of Iraqis by U.S. personnel at Abu Ghraib prison. These and related issues, festering since 2003, gained traction in the spring of 2004 and provided recruitment fodder for a growing Sunni insurgency. The young firebrand Shia cleric, Muqtada al-Sadr, seized the opportunity and with his militia and

other supporters created havoc in the southern cities of Karbala, Najaf, and Al Kut, south and southeast of Baghdad. By May 2004, according to former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, "the whole country was boiling."[30]

To add to the chaos were several major transitions during June and July. Two new headquarters, the MNF-I and MNC-I, stood up to replace the smaller combat-focused CJTF-7. Then the Coalition Provisional Authority passed sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government and stood down. Recognizing the new status of a sovereign Iraq, the U.S. re-established its embassy with Ambassador John Negroponte at the helm. But with this new team came a strategy.

The strategy: Ends, ways, and means

> Our mission is to help the Iraqi people build a new Iraq, at peace with its neighbors, with a constitutional, representative government that respects human rights and possesses security forces sufficient to maintain domestic order, and deny Iraq as a safe haven for terrorists … The elements and timetable associated with this mission are elaborated in the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) and UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1546. – Joint Mission Statement[31]

The August 2004 Joint Mission Statement between Ambassador John Negroponte and General George Casey, commander of the newly formed MNF-I, established the desired end state, "A new Iraq …" The timetable referenced in the TAL and UNSCR 1546 was ambitious: Direct democratic elections to form an Iraqi Transitional Government no later than 31 January, a general referendum to approve a constitution no later than 15 October, and elections for a permanent government to be held no later than 15 December 2005.[32]

The "means" or resources to attain the end state would be provided by the Coalition and Iraqis; the balance would change from the Coalition to the Iraqis over time. President Bush described it, "As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down."[33]

The "ways," in which this would be accomplished, or the "how," would generally be approached through three interrelated areas: political, security, and economic.[34] The August 2004 Campaign plan would say that a little

differently, characterizing it as four lines of operations: security, governance, economic development, and communicating.[35]

The August 2004 Joint Mission Statement recognized that the biggest threat to building a legitimate GOI was the insurgency that was "principally led by well-funded Sunni-Arab-Rejectionists (SAR) drawn from Former Regime Elements (FRE)." SAR/FRE, disenfranchised and marginalized, sought to regain their political and economic influence. In addition to the several factions that comprised the SAR/FRE, there was a growing group of internal Islamic extremists, as well as out-of-country sources. They intended to impose their extremist Islamic vision. Although ideology and other incentives differed between the SAR/FRE and Islamic extremists, a principal goal was the same: to disrupt the political process and rid Iraq of the Coalition.[36]

MNF-I's mission of partnering with the GOI to "create a security environment that permits the completion of the UNSCR 1546 process on schedule" would be accomplished through developing the Iraqi Security Forces and "Conducting full-spectrum counterinsurgency operations to isolate and neutralize FRE and foreign terrorist." This would be done by, "driving a wedge between the insurgents and the people of Iraq."[37] Techniques for separating the people from the insurgents included "engagement, reconciliation, and inclusion and removal of their grievances by the application of the full range of political and economic tools." Those that couldn't/wouldn't be influenced, such as the hardcore extremists, would be "the focus of the military effort" and eliminated via "capture or kill."[38]

Engagement, reconciliation, and inclusion

The purpose of engagement and reconciliation was to separate those who could be influenced from the insurgency. This meant addressing grievances and reconciling past transgressions, and included such things as amnesty that involved complex ethical issues that extended vertically and horizontally across commands and equities. The questions become, "under what authorities, at what level, engage who, and reconcile what?" As an example, "What was the Coalition's policy toward the tribes?" It seemed to change over time. The following quote, from an anonymous source in a 2005 *Time* article entitled, "Saddam's Revenge," accused the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) as being anti-tribal: "The standard answer we got from Bremer's

people was that tribes are a vestige of the past, that they have no place in the new democratic Iraq."[39]

Bremer adamantly denied the accusation. As examples to the contrary, he cited his outreach program, his meeting with tribal leaders, and the paying of tribes to protect oil and electrical power lines. He went on, "If someone on my staff was stupid enough to say the tribes were a vestige of the past, well, there's no accounting for stupidity."[40]

However, as early as the summer of 2003 the CPA in Baghdad turned down a request from Al Anbar Coalition leadership to work with the tribes to provide area security. Specifically, in 2003, Sheikh Bezi Majil Nijris al-Gaoud approached Major General Swannack, commander, 82nd Airborne Division, and Keith Mines, Coalition Provisional Authority Governance Coordinator for Al Anbar, with an offer to supply tribesman as provincial security forces if the Coalition would fund and arm them. Although Swannack and Mines saw this as a great idea, it was rejected by the CPA in Baghdad.[41]

Additionally, then-Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld sent Bremer one of his infamous memorandums in April 2004, entitled, "Sunni Outreach," and urged that the CPA pursue a number of tribal engagement initiatives to include using Special Forces teams to build relationships.[42]

According to Colonel Rick Welch, the CPA did open an office called Office of Provincial Outreach in 2004. "Their job was to connect with national, tribal, confederation leaders, and national religious leaders." When the CPA dissolved on 28 June 2004 (transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqis) there was nobody from the Department of State to take ownership of that program in that same way.[43] Colonel Welch, assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad, had worked with some of the CPA members associated with the program and, with the approval of Major General Peter Chiarelli, 1st Cavalry Division commander, took over the outreach office.[44]

During this same timeframe (summer of 2004), I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) representatives from Al Anbar were meeting with Sunni tribal leaders that had fled Al Anbar, as well as insurgent representatives, in Amman, Jordan. The meetings were arranged by Talal Al-Gaoud, a businessman in Amman and son of Sheikh Bezi.[45] That relationship became so strong that Colonel Michael Walker, former 3rd Civil Affairs group commander in Iraq from February to September 2004, attributed the start of the Awakening movement in Iraq to relationships the MEF fostered with the Iraqis at

those meetings, specifically with the Al Gaoud clan.[46] Later events would reinforce that perception.

But their contact wasn't limited to just the Al Gaoud clan. In a larger context, Sheikh Bezi, a member of the Al Gaoud clan, was a part of a network of notable tribal leaders, former Iraqi military, and former insurgents who found sanctuary in Jordan, because living and working in Iraq had become too dangerous. The tribal leaders—in Jordan, Syria, and Iraq— regularly spoke with Sheikh Bezi on the phone and sometimes visited him in Amman. The older sheikh was able to offer advice and guidance, as he had access to the larger picture of what was happening in Anbar because of his connection to the network of Anbaris, both resident and expatriate.[47]

However, the newly established American Embassy in Iraq seemed to disassociate itself from tribal engagement, and the State Department and Embassy in Amman seemed to do the same. Not only did the State Department not take ownership of the outreach program, it seemed opposed to the MEF's engagements in Amman. According to Colonel Michael Walker, USMC, commander, 3rd Civil Affairs Group in Iraq from February to September 2004, the Embassy prevented those meetings from continuing in the early fall of 2004.[48]

At the same time, mid to late summer, the MNF-I and MNC-I were getting their feet on the ground and were consumed with controlling Sadr's Shia uprising in Najaf as well as the Sunni insurgent safe haven in Fallujah—a critical action in preparation for the January 2005 national elections. At the national level, they primarily left engagement of the Sunnis to Prime Minister Ayad Allawi. He hosted a number of high level Al Anbar Sunnis and insurgent representatives in his home as he sought a political resolution to the Fallujah problem, unfortunately to no avail.[49]

Additionally, Prime Minister Allawi attempted to initiate an amnesty program in the summer of 2004; but it was met by loud opposition from all fronts—Sunni, Shia, and Coalition. The biggest objection was against those that killed Americans or other Iraqis—those that had blood on their hands. The final rule, according to Allawi's deputy, would only apply to "people who indirectly assisted the insurgency … and not to the killers themselves."[50] The program became too hard to define and gain the support of all stakeholders, so it died before it was implemented. But it would be introduced at a later time when conditions were more favorable.

Eliminating Fallujah as an insurgent safe haven: second- and third-order effects

Coalition military operations in Fallujah from March to December 2004 created chaos for communities along the WERV northwest of Fallujah. During Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE, also known as Fallujah I, in that city in April, Coalition forces were directed to leave cities such as Hit, Baghdadi, and Hadithah in order to support the operation. With the Coalition gone, the insurgents exploited the situation by targeting residents who had helped Coalition forces. When the Coalition began returning in May, they found most of the populace unwilling to work with them.

By summer 2004, Fallujah became unbearable for its residents. They had come to understand through experience the horrors of living under AQI's extreme interpretation of *Sharia*. Instead of partnering with the Iraqi people to fight the occupiers, the extremists, led by the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, demanded to lead the *jihad* with the intent of first destroying and then transforming the social fabric of the province. Notable Fallujah area residents such as Farhan De Hal Farhani, the future mayor of Al Qaim, fled Fallujah, carrying the message that these *takfiris*, or extremists, were really the enemy of the Iraqi people. This realization and simple message met the first condition toward what would become the Awakening.

That situation worsened. In November, while the Coalition prepared for and executed Operation AL FAJR, also known as Fallujah II,[51] Coalition forces left communities along the WERV to support the operation. Again, the insurgents moved in to punish those who had supported the Coalition.

At the national level, although brutal, the Coalition's Operation AL FAJR was seen by the Coalition as a success; it cleared Fallujah of insurgents and opened the window for what would be considered successful national elections for an Iraqi Transitional Government in January 2005. Nationwide there was a 58 percent voter turnout (8.5 million voters). However, only 1 percent of the registered Anabaris turned out to vote.[52]

At the operational and tactical level, insurgents who fled the fighting in Fallujah during AL FAJR found refuge in those communities along the Euphrates, reinforced the insurgent forces already there, and contributed to the turmoil in those areas.[53] The movement of those insurgents—which included Sunni nationalists as well as foreign fighters taking direction from AQI leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi—contributed to the ground conditions

that Marine Regimental Combat Team Two and SOF found in 2005 in AO Denver, which was primarily situated in the Western Euphrates area of Al Anbar.

The next chapter will focus on AO Denver, but for perspective it will begin with a background of events in the area starting in 2003.

3. The Western Euphrates River Valley

The Western Euphrates, known to the Coalition as AO Denver, was a 30,000-square-mile region in Western Iraq, which included several major population centers along the WERV: Hit, Hadithah, and Al Qaim district. Moreover, AO Denver shared borders with Jordan, Syria, and Saudi Arabia.
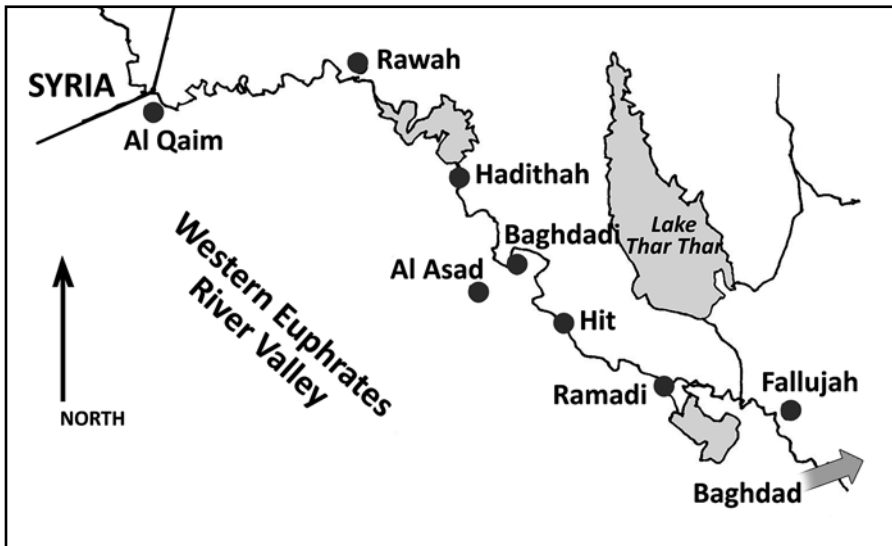
Figure 2. Map of the Western Euphrates River Valley in Al Anbar.
Source: U.S. Special Operations Command Graphics

Background: AO Denver

AO Denver was essentially an economy of force area during the initial phase of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM I (OIF I). Elements of the 5th Special Forces Group (SFG), forming the nucleus of the CJSOTF-W, deployed to the area to prevent the launch of SCUD missiles. By June 2003, most of the SOF redeployed to the States, and by July 2003, CJSOTF-W was renamed CJSOTF-Arabian Peninsula (AP), moved to Baghdad, and became responsible for SOF operations in Iraq. In Al Anbar they had elements in Al Qaim and Ramadi/Fallujah.[54]

Additional force reductions were planned for 2004; however, indications of a growing insurgency forced the Coalition to plan for sustained presence, both conventional and SOF. As such, the Marines prepared to move a MEF into Al Anbar to assume responsibilities from the 82nd Airborne Division. Regimental Combat Team 7 (RCT-7) assumed responsibility for AO Denver in March 2004 with a battalion in Al Qaim and a battalion in Hadithah, but as indicated earlier, spent a lot of its time in the Fallujah area.

Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) planned on the rotation of the 5th and 10th SFG Headquarters as the CJSOTF-AP. Due to a low density of Army SOF, all SF Groups and SEAL contingents were available to support the manpower requirements. A number of rotations reflected a group headquarters with a mix of battalions and ODAs from other groups. As an example, in January of 2004, 10th Group assumed command of the CJSOTF-AP. But subordinate to the 10th SFG-run CJSOTF was a 5th Group Forward Operation Base (FOB) responsible for an Advanced Operation Base (AOB), and ODAs in Al Anbar.

Additionally, the SEAL contingent increased from a Naval Special Warfare Task Unit to a Naval Special Warfare Task Group (NSWTG) with an element deployed to Hadithah.[55] The missions ranged from foreign internal defense (FID) to special reconnaissance, direct action, and advanced special operations. Of the ODAs in Al Anbar, ODA 594 conducted advanced special operations in Al Qaim district and ODA 555 deployed to Al Asad to work FID and special reconnaissance. An ODA also deployed to Fallujah to support ongoing operations in that area. This monograph focuses on the work of the ODAs with the tribes in Al Qaim and the Corridor, an area primarily from Hit to Hadithah, but at times extending to Rawah, in the development and implementation of the Desert Protectors program.

(a) Al Qaim, 2004

According to Master Sergeant Steve Bleigh, team sergeant, ODA 594's mission was to intercept insurgents coming across the border in Husaybah, along the north and south sides of the Euphrates River.[56] He described attempts at working with the tribes in Al Qaim in early 2004:

> The whole time I was in Al Qaim, I didn't feel good … it was a nasty place. In Husaybah [the border town in Al Qaim District], if you talked to anyone and they talked to you, they got killed; they

ended up in "Body Wadi" [his term for the Emerald Wadi east of Husaybah] … for a while there wasn't a week that didn't go by that they [the insurgents] didn't put a body in a box.

In order to talk to people, we went to the border checkpoint, because everybody is rolling through at the checkpoint; that is where we had the most success.[57]

During the first month or two, his team worked with elements of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), the battle space owners. In about March 2004, area responsibility transferred from 3rd ACR to 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment (3/7), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Matt Lopez. According to Bleigh, the Marines thought it was going to be more of a civil affairs-type of operation, but they "transitioned pretty quickly once they started losing guys."

When specifically asked about Sheik Sabah, principal sheikh of the Albu-Mahal tribe in Al Qaim, Bleigh indicated that the team sergeant from ODA 531, the ODA his team replaced, was killed by Sabah's people and Sabah "had blood on his hands." Sabah readily admitted to fighting the Coalition, stating that it was his legal right as an Iraqi to resist invaders.[58] Bleigh's attempts to gain approval for a target package on Sabah were not supported by other government agencies.[59]

Success in Al Qaim in 2004 was mostly at the checkpoints and not as result of working with the tribes. That would change in 2005.

(b) The Corridor, 2004

One thing that 16 years in the [5th SF] group gave me … I understood the tribes, I realized everything was tribal. – Master Sergeant Andy Marchal, team chief, ODA 555[60]

In early February 2004, Special Forces ODA 555 from 5th SFG entered the Corridor. From their operating base in Al Asad, they were responsible for the area from Rawah in the northwest to Hit in the southeast. They had replaced ODA 525, and the team's mission was "to identify and exploit opportunities to split al-Qaeda elements from nationalist strands of the insurgency."[61] Master Sergeant Marchal knew from past experiences that the tribes were critical, and he and his men would be competing with the insurgents for tribal support. The team's plan was simple: figure out which

was the most powerful tribe in the AO and work with it.[62] Prior to entering the area, Marchal's team identified the Albu-Nimr tribe as the dominant tribe in the area, mostly located in Hit. During the handover, ODA 525 provided ODA 555 an area orientation as well as a number of sources. At their recommendation, Marchal linked up with an informant called "Nubs" from the Shall clan of the Albu-Nimr tribe. Nubs provided several clansmen to form the nucleus of an anti-AQI unit.

By the end of March, the unit had grown to 12 and had conducted a number of successful source-driven operations in the Corridor. Additionally, ODA 555 had developed their local/street Arabic to a point that they only spoke Arabic while on a mission, and used indigenous clothes, weapons, and explosives. This paid psychological dividends as rumors started circulating of this "vigilante" anti-insurgent unit. To reinforce their message, they crafted and left behind leaflets lauding the successes of this Iraqi freedom group they named, "Sword of the Prophet."[63]

During this time, Master Sergeant Marchal had met with Sheikh Abdul Razak, the paramount sheikh of the Albu-Nimr tribe in Iraq and a member of the Al Gaoud clan, the Nimr's most prominent clan.[64] Marchal heard the Coalition wasn't supposed to be dealing with the tribes through an unlikely source: Razak. During one of their first meetings Razak remarked, "Hey, what's up with that guy [Bremer the CPA]? He says he's not going to deal with the tribes or any of the tribal sheikhs." However, that didn't deter this developing relationship. Of note, during the same timeframe, this is the same clan that the MEF was working with in Amman, Jordan, to discuss economic development for Al Anbar and meet with representatives of the insurgency.[65]

To show its commitment and to reinforce their relationship with the tribe, ODA 555 began performing small-scale civil affairs projects in Hit's Al Phurat district (on the northeast side of the Euphrates River, across from Hit, see Figure 3), which largely comprised members of the Albu-Nimr tribe. By mid-April, Sheikh Abdul Razak and ODA team leadership were meeting routinely, and the anti-insurgent unit had established itself as provisional company of Shall/Albu-Nimr tribesmen in support of Coalition efforts.[66]

Recall that late March/April 2004 was also a critical period in Al Anbar. Four Blackwater contractors were killed in Fallujah on 31 March 2004. The Marines, against their better judgment and recommendations, were ordered into the city to kill or capture the perpetrators. Although ODA 555 was eager to employ this tribal team in Fallujah to support Marine operations, Major

Adam Such, the AOB commander, in coordination with the 1st Marine Division, already had teams in the Fallujah area, and saw ODA 555's contributions with the Albu-Nimr in the Corridor (rather than Fallujah) as much more important to the overall fight. During April through May the tribesmen supported the Coalition efforts in Fallujah by keeping the main road between Al Asad Airbase and Fallujah clear of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Additionally, as Marine units left the area to support operations in Fallujah, the provisional company helped provide security, to the extent possible, in those vacated areas.[67] General James Mattis, then the commander of the 1st Marine Division, would later credit Major Such and ODA 555's work with the Albu-Nimr tribe as the beginning of the Awakening movement:

> The Army Special Forces, Major Adam A. Such came in, linked up with us. I believe it was in December, before we deployed ... Adam would be the one who, with his guys out in the Hit/Haditha area, made initial contact with the Abu Nimer tribe and actually began what eventually morphed into the Anbar Awakening. This is, by the way, in April-May-June of 2004.[68]
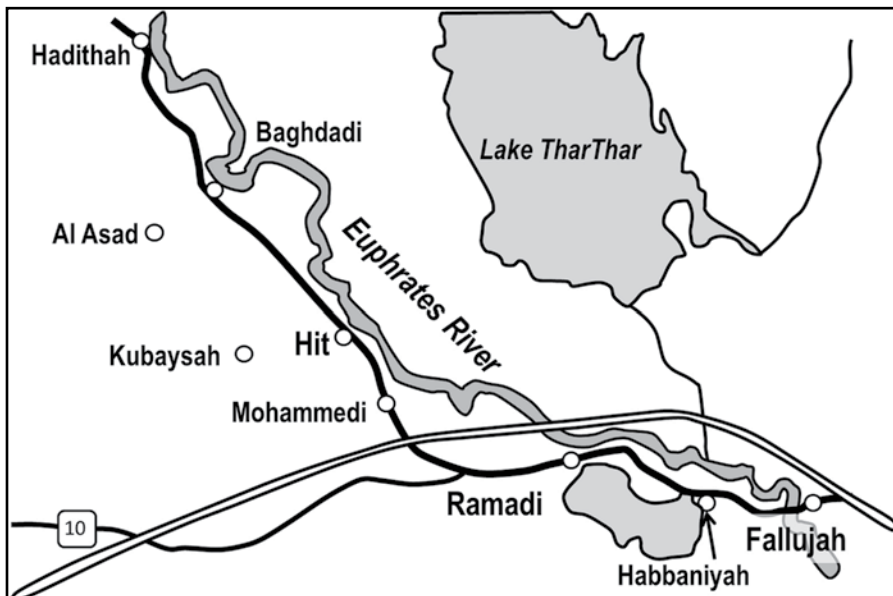
Figure 3. Map of Hit and Surrounding Area.
Source: U.S. Special Operations Command Graphics.

The ODA now realized that the growing recognition of the Albu-Nimr's affiliation with this anti-insurgent vigilante unit was forcing the flipping of the tribe; they were now recognized, at least unofficially, as a pro-Coalition tribe because of their actions against AQI and the other insurgent groups. By the spring of 2004 Sheikh Razak declared himself pro-Coalition and was able to show the team areas in which they would be safe. In return, the Team promised to coordinate projects and funding through Razak. According to Master Sergeant Marchal, "He [Razak] and I kind of became friends."

The connection that ODA 555 had painstakingly built with the Albu-Nimr tribe was setback when, in late June 2004, the CPA transferred sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government. The transfer changed a number of policies and relationships. One of the policy changes eliminated the use of Commanders Emergency Response Program funds to pay local security forces. With funding terminated in June and the redeployment of ODA 555 to the states in July, the Coalition ceased supporting the Albu-Nimr company. The plan was to transfer the tribesmen into the 503rd Iraqi National Guard (ING) Battalion. However, the Albu-Nimr tribe saw the 503rd as corrupt and many of the tribesmen elected not to join.[69] In the fall of 2004, because of scarce SOF resources and a greater need in the Baghdad area, ODAs were withdrawn from the WERV, thus breaking the SOF/Albu-Nimr connection in the Hit area.[70] So at the tactical level, SOF disengaged with the Albu-Nimr tribe and at the national level the MEF was discouraged from meeting with them in Amman.[71]

But 2005 would see drastic changes in forces available and strategy to reshape conditions along the WERV. This strategy included official authorization to engage the tribes.

RCT-2 arrives in AO Denver, March 2005

Regimental Combat Team Two (RCT-2) assumed responsibility of AO Denver from RCT-7 in March 2005. Colonel Stephen Davis, commander of RCT-2, described the environment:

> The Euphrates is a highway. It's been a highway for 4,000 years. These are business men out here, and you need to look at this area through a different lens. The solution out here will be found as a business equation. This is not good guys versus bad guys, although there were plenty of bad guys. Everybody's got a business angle up here,

because that's what they do. And there are some great survivors up here. They've survived 35 years of Saddam. He couldn't tame them, and so by understanding this, you start to understand a bit about the environment that we were walking into.[72]

RCT-2's command was based out of Al Asad Airbase, which is south of the river between Hadithah and Hit (in the middle of the Corridor, see above map at Figure 3). AO Denver—nicknamed "The Wild West"—had been occupied by SOF and Army units throughout 2003. From early 2004, when I MEF took control of Al Anbar, RCTs were assigned to Al Asad Airbase in AO Denver until September 2009 when RCT-8 was redeployed as part of the Coalition drawdown in Iraq.[73]

Colonel Davis' members in RCT-2 described themselves as "The little RCT with a Division mission in a MEF battlespace." The regiment deployed with 3,200 Marines and Sailors—in the form of two infantry battalions: 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines (3/25), and 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines (3/2)—as well as two Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) companies. "We were totally an economy of force effort," Davis said.[74]

The regiment's plan consisted of 16 major combat operations—an operation about every two-to-three weeks. The campaign plan was a part of what Colonel Davis called the "be everywhere, yet be nowhere" strategy.[75]

Colonel Davis described RCT-2's plan—linking it to the mission, goals, and overall strategy—as real simple:

> My mission: Conduct COIN [counterinsurgency] operations in order to disrupt and interdict anti-Iraqi insurgent elements. Our goal was to ultimately get these areas to where the National Referendum and the National Elections could be held. How we were going to do that was by establishing the combined, permanent, persistent presence in the major population centers in the Euphrates River Valley, *combined* being the key part. Being able to establish presence gives you security, which gives you stability, which creates the environment for success to occur.[76]

The first half of RCT-2's deployment comprised cordon and search; disrupt and interdict; and clear, attack, and neutralize missions. Because RCT-2 only had discretionary use of four rifle companies during the first half of

the deployment, it was unable to go north of the Euphrates River. Instead, Colonel Davis focused on keeping the enemy off balance.

> To the outside observer who wasn't really looking at what we were doing here, it looked like we were just playing "whack-a-mole." All we were trying to do was stay alive and keep the enemy, particularly the foreign fighters, off balance. Again, we were only talking to the security LOO [line of operation] here; we're trying to keep this guy off balance, and I'm trying to get inside his OODA [observe, orient, decide, and act] loop in order to make him reactive to me, not the other way around.[77]

Camp Gannon: A defining moment

A defining moment for the regiment came during its second month there, in April 2005, when Camp Gannon in the border town of Husaybah in Al Qaim District was attacked by insurgents linked to Zarqawi. The insurgents unleashed a triple suicide bombing and demonstrated they were capable of conducting complex and well organized operations. Miraculously, 3/2 lost no Marines and successfully fended off the attack; but they were surprised by the attack's complexity and the insurgents' discipline and commitment.

Within 24 hours the insurgents posted the video announcing the attack as "a victory for Allah … a victory against the coalition … a victory in which we free Iraq from the American oppressors." However, the townspeople quickly learned that the Coalition lost no forces. To save face, the foreign fighters announced over the mosque loud speakers that the "Americans didn't die because you [the townspeople of Husaybah] are bad Muslims … or else we would have had victory." The people of Husaybah didn't buy the propaganda.[78]

Soon after the April attack, the Marines heard the sound of gunshots coming from the Market Place in Husaybah one night. They called a local source who resided at the east end of Husaybah, and asked, "What's going on?" She replied, "Well, there was a fight in the Market Place between the foreign fighters and a local. The local is making fun of them for not killing any of you guys. And the foreign fighters shot and killed him." This was the Marines' first indication that something was going on that they might be able to influence. Captain Frank Diorio, the Marine company commander

responsible for the area explained, "There was no inclination that they liked us … but they were making fun of the foreign fighters … [so maybe it is something] we can use."[79]

Although this may have been the Marines first sense of a rift between the tribes and AQI, trouble had been building for months. To protect their equities and control the population, AQI had not been allowing the tribes to arm and protect themselves. Security in Al Qaim, and in particular in Husaybah, had become untenable. The Albu-Mahal appointed one of their own tribesmen, Major Ahmed Adiya Asaf, as the new chief of police.[80]

On 2 May 2005, Major Ahmed was walking Main Street in the market area of Husaybah when seven men attacked, shot, and beheaded him.[81] AQI was simply reinforcing the declaration it had made earlier to the tribal leadership that AQI, not the tribes of Al Qaim, would be in charge of security—AQI would not tolerate competition of any sort.

The beheading of Major Ahmed proved to be the last straw. The Albu-Mahal became the first tribe to openly revolt against AQI.[82]

4. An Awakening in Al Qaim

Anbar Province's Al Qaim district became increasingly important to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's AQI after November 2004 when it lost its sanctuary to the Coalition forces' onslaught in the second battle of Fallujah, Operation AL FAJR. Al Qaim district is located on Iraq's border with Syria. Although the district's population of 150,000 to 200,000 represents only 10 percent of the Anbar population, the area holds strategic importance due to its location on the Iraqi border and along the Euphrates River.[83] Al Qaim is a lucrative smuggling route for black market goods, and was AQI's lifeline to Baghdad as foreign fighters, money, and other resources that fueled the insurgency infiltrated Iraq. With the loss of Fallujah, Al Qaim also became AQI's newfound sanctuary.

Background

AQI arrived with offers of partnering with Al Qaim's tribes to defeat the Coalition. They promised money and other resources. As Sunni Muslims and Arabs, AQI members said it was the obligation of Al Qaim to conduct *jihad*, to fight the crusaders. After all, the Coalition, ignorant of tribal customs, religion, and traditions, had disrespected and dishonored the people of Al Qaim, and a patriotic resistance had already formed there. Initially, the tribes of Al Qaim saw the al-Qaeda movement as the "complete jihad."[84] They believed it was time to rid the area of the occupiers. Together, they—AQI, the tribes, and their militias—could do that.

The tribes of the region varied in size and available resources and were not capable of defeating the Coalition occupiers on their own. Some, like the Albu-Mahal tribe, the strongest tribe in the area, organized and resourced the Hamza Battalion specifically to fight the Coalition.[85] However, even with the support of the tribal militia, the Albu-Mahal lacked the weaponry, ammunition, and other equipment to win such a fight. AQI's offer of support was tempting. Most of the tribes accepted.

But AQI's offer was deceptive; this was not a partnership. AQI provided weaponry and funding, but they also demanded to lead the jihad with the intent of first destroying and then transforming the social fabric of Al Qaim. They started by taking over the smuggling routes, skimming profits, and

killing those who resisted. They then imposed a radical form of *Sharia* Law on the community with fanatical punishments for transgressors. AQI used religion to justify its actions, which included forced marriages to the local women.[86] The most common intimidation tactic was to behead those who resisted and leave the head on the chest of the body in the street for all to see—sometimes only the head was left and the body disposed of in the river or the *jazeera*, the desert. Despite the risk of brutal retribution, there were dissenters among the tribes, particularly within the Albu-Mahal in Husaybah, the small Iraqi border town which served as Al Qaim's main market, and the port of entry.

AQI needed to show it was in charge; it could not afford dissenters or challengers. The most visible challenge to their authority was the Coalition's Camp Gannon, which was located in the northwest corner of Husaybah.[87] Despite the well-planned attack of 11 April 2005, their premature announcement of a "tremendous victory" backfired, provoking ridicule from skeptical Husaybah residents. Silencing those skeptics sent a signal to the Camp Gannon Marine company commander of a growing rift between the foreign fighters and residents. AQI's brutal killing of the Husaybah police chief Major Ahmed, an Albu-Mahal tribesman and relative of Sheikh Sabah, was a turning point.

Albu-Mahal rejects al-Qaeda in Iraq

The change was swift. On the same day Major Ahmed was killed, Albu-Mahal's Hamza Battalion turned on AQI and their local supporters, other tribes such as the Karbulis and Salmanis. The militia that was created to fight Coalition forces changed course and led the Albu-Mahal into their first major battle against foreign and local insurgents.[88]

The expected ferocity of AQI's reaction to Albu-Mahal's challenge—and the realization of the magnitude of the consequences should they fail—prompted Albu-Mahal members to call upon the Coalition for assistance. Former Governor of Al Anbar Province, Fasal al-Gaoud, contacted Americans at Camp Fallujah on behalf of the Albu-Mahals.[89] Al-Gaoud was a member of the Albu-Nimr tribe, which shares ancestry as well as history with the Albu-Mahal tribe.[90]

The Albu-Nimrs are the dominant tribe in Hit, a town northwest of Ramadi. In addition to Fasal's call for help, Albu-Mahal leadership called

Bruska Nouri Shaways, Iraqi Deputy Minister of Defense, requesting the Coalition forces' support.[91] The intent was promising, but the potential would become lost in the confusion of what seemed to the Coalition to be a case of a "red-on-red" struggle for power. On 10 May, AQI kidnapped Al Anbar Governor Nawaf Farhan, a member of the Albu-Mahal tribe and cousin of Sheikh Sabah, the Paramount Sheikh of the Albu-Mahal tribe. Governor Nawaf attempted to reconcile the conflict in Al Qaim, but found himself a pawn in AQI's campaign to intimidate the tribes into compliance. AQI had gone too far, however, and this act only further infuriated the Mahalawis and strengthened their resolve against AQI.[92]

In the midst of the conflict between AQI and the Albu-Mahal, RCT-2 launched Operation MATADOR on 7 May. The operation, planned before the fighting broke out between AQI and Albu-Mahal, was designed to disrupt terrorist activities in the Al Qaim region.[93] The resulting twin offensives against AQI—the Albu-Mahal's Hamza Battalion's and RCT-2's—were separate and uncoordinated. They both targeted the same enemy, but in different areas—the Albu-Mahal's primarily in Husaybah to the west and south of the river, and RCT-2 in the east near Ubaydi and north of the river to the border.

When residents returned after fleeing during Operation MATADOR, they found destroyed homes and fellow tribesman, some who had remained behind to support the Coalition, dead. Fasal al-Gaoud complained that the Coalition forces did not discriminate between AQI forces and the growing tribal anti-AQI forces.[94] On-the-ground Coalition forces, still unaware of any Albu-Mahal request for help and unable to discriminate among what they considered to be red forces, claimed success in clearing insurgent areas. While the Coalition acknowledged that locals had provided intelligence information to support the assault, they remained dubious of local efforts to work with the Coalition in the fight.[95]

Despite the confusion, Albu-Mahal's Hamza Battalion cleared Husaybah and pushed AQI to the east into Karabilah—a town south of the Euphrates populated by the Karbuli tribe, an AQI supporter. With Husaybah cleared, the Albu-Mahals began reconstructing damaged sections of the city and established tribal security around critical infrastructure such as government buildings and services. According to Colonel Ahmad, future leader of the Desert Protectors, remaining pockets of AQI seemed to dissipate throughout June and July from areas around Husaybah as the insurgent group moved east towards Rawah.[96]
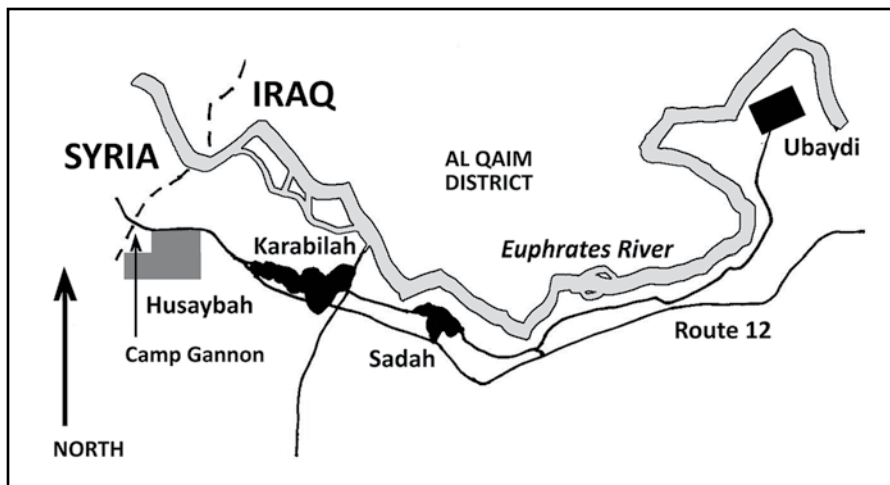
Figure 4. Map of Al Qaim area. Source: U.S. Special
Operations Command Graphics

Al-Qaeda returns with a vengeance

Albu-Mahal's struggle with AQI was far from over. During June and most of July, under the guise of negotiations, AQI gathered thousands of fighters from Mosul, Diyala, Baghdad, and Salah al-Din into Al Qaim area. On 25 July 2005, after nearly two months of building up its forces, AQI returned with a vengeance. Injured in earlier fighting, Zarqawi, the leader of AQI, took personal interest in this operation. Within four days, thousands of AQI fighters, heavily outnumbering the 300–400 Albu-Mahal fighters, attacked and killed 60 tribal members. They also destroyed 41 family homes by detonating each house's propane tank, including that of Sheikh Sabah.[97]

AQI attacked from three directions: from the Syrian border area in the west, from across the Euphrates River in the north, and from the east. As a result, the only route of escape open to the Albu-Mahal fighters was to the south. The Mahalawis, outnumbered and out of ammunition, fled for their lives. Most sought refuge with other tribal members in Akashat, 100 miles to the south of Al Qaim. Some travelled to Sufia, east of Ramadi, to stay with tribal brethren. Those who could afford to fled to Syria or Jordan.[98]

Afraid for his tribe, Sheikh Sabah, from his refuge in Jordan, contacted the Iraqi Minister of Defense Dr. Dulaymi, and, according to Dr. Dulaymi, told him, "We need help, because our children, our women, old men, are all surrounded and … the terrorists are going to kill them all." Upon learning

this, Coalition Commander General Casey dispatched an airplane to transport Sabah from Amman to Baghdad. According to Dr. Dulaymi, a small group then "… met together in my office and put together a plan to help the people of Al Qaim, not just the Albu-Mahal tribe, but all the people of Al Qaim."[99]

In Al Qaim, prospects were grim for those that remained. The Mahalawis were no longer worried about AQI skimming profits or imposing a harsh social code. It was now a question of survival. As predicted by Sabah, AQI continued its murder and intimidation campaign against those Mahalawis who were trapped and could not flee. On the ground, Captain Diorio was getting regular updates from sources in Husaybah. He recalled, "Foreign fighters gathered to come kill my contact, my source, his family, and his immediate tribe [Albu-Mahal]"[100]

Captain Diorio received a phone call from a source, who told him that about 250 insurgents were at the "palace." "At the same time," Captain Diorio said, "there [was] a lot of rhetoric that Zarqawi himself was coming to lead this, because he was annoyed by this Sunni tribe rising up against another Sunni tribe."

The information, corroborated through other sources, started to gain traction, and Captain Diorio gained approval for an air strike on "the palace"—at least 100 were killed. This angered AQI and prompted it to bring in more fighters to complete the assault on Albu-Mahal.

Now it was minute-by-minute updates; per Captain Diorio:

> We were getting frantic phone calls: "We're getting run over." And then perhaps the most surreal moments … we saw in the hundreds, Iraqis come out of the north end of the city towards our OP [outpost] … with their hands up. They are now coming in full daylight out of the city towards our OP with their hands up.

According to Captain Diorio, this was a true turning point as the Albu-Mahal turned to the Marines for help. "This is the tipping point that every counterinsurgency needs. This is the tipping point that you now have a Sunni tribe, the Albu-Mahal, who to the point of their very own lives, sided with Coalition forces, sided with India Company, sided with Marine Corps."

Psychologically, the Albu-Mahal may have tipped, but physically, they no longer remained in Al Qaim. By 5 September, Zarqawi reportedly controlled the region and posted signs to that effect.[101] Despite the long list of

Coalition transgressions and a deep mistrust of the GOI, AQI's savage and uncompromising trajectory towards fanaticism convinced the Albu-Mahals that siding with the Coalition and GOI was a more palatable alternative to misery and death. AQI provided the Coalition and GOI an opportunity to change the balance in their favor and under their terms.

How would the Coalition handle this? What was the policy for engaging the tribes, in particular one that had "Coalition blood on its hands?" That's the subject of the next chapter.

5. Policy Changes and the Development of the Desert Protectors

The January 2005 election results were a clear indication that the Sunnis were not involved in the political process. Although deemed a success at the National level with a 58 percent voter turnout rate, Al Anbar's rate was a dismal 1 percent. This was attributed to the chaos and level of conflict in Al Anbar, as well as a Sunni insurgent encouraged boycott of the elections.[102] Something had to change in dealing with Sunnis.

It appeared that the State Department policy, albeit unwritten, changed with the departure of Ambassador John Negroponte in April 2005 and arrival of Ambassador Zalmay Khalizad in May 2005.[103] According to General Casey, "When Zal got there we started doing things [Sunni outreach] with Lynch and pulling things together." As an example, in May 2005, MNF-I stood up a Tribal Engagement Cell and General Casey tasked Major General Rick Lynch, deputy chief of staff for Strategic Effects for MNF-I and the MNF-I spokesman, to "reach out to some of the Sunni extremists." At the request of Lynch, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi had met with Sunni insurgent representatives at his house and used his connections to bring Sunni leaders with ties to the insurgency to Baghdad.[104] Although, according to Lynch, the initial engagements with the Sunni leaders connected to the insurgents did not bear fruit, engagement did have impacts at the operational and tactical levels. Despite a Shia dominated government, one of the primary advocates from the GOI was Dr. Dulaymi, a Sunni, and the Minister of Defense under Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari.[105]

Dr. Dulaymi was from the Albu-Risha tribe of the Dulaymi confederation. He was also Sheikh Sattar Albu-Risha's uncle and grew up in a community next to the Sattar compound on the west side of Ramadi. Sheikh Sattar would become the leader of the Ramadi awakening movement that started in September 2006. These relationships are significant as linkages between Awakening events, locations, and people, and are discussed later.

According to Brigadier General Daniel Bolger, deputy commander, MNC-I from February to June 2005 and commander of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), from June 2005 to June 2006, Dr. Dulaymi spent a

lot of his time talking to tribal leaders in Al Anbar and reminding Generals Casey, Petraeus (commander, MNSTC-I), and others of the importance of tribal outreach.[106] As an Iraqi and social psychologist, Dr. Dulaymi understood that reaching out and engaging the Sunnis was critical to driving a wedge between the insurgents and the Iraqis, and to changing the balance of popular support. But, on the cautionary side, there was also the realization that if the Coalition and GOI provided help to the tribes, they would have to deal with the perception that they were supporting a tribal militia; that might be seen as an anathema to Iraq's central Government's legitimacy.[107] As such, one of his challenges was to convince Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari that they should capitalize on this opportunity with the Albu-Mahal tribe in Al Qaim. According to Dr. Dulaymi, Al Jaafari's biggest fear was that this Sunni force would "be trained and become a threat to the rest of Iraq."[108] To diffuse this perception, potential recruits needed to be vetted and drafted into government service.

On the other hand, Dr. Dulaymi also had to convince the Albu-Mahal tribe to join with the GOI in some formal way. Just as the Coalition and GOI viewed militias as an anathema to government legitimacy, the Sunni tribesmen, for the most part, found the stigma of being associated with the Ministry of Defense (MOD) or Ministry of Interior (MOI) just as repugnant. Additionally, according to Dr. Dulaymi, Dr. Hareth al-Dhari, Director of the Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS) and the spiritual energy behind the insurgency in Al Anbar, had issued a "*Fatwa*, a religious statement, saying that if they joined one of those organizations, they will be an Infidel. And, if you are an Infidel you should be killed."[109]

Therefore, this new organization, explained Dr. Dulaymi, would be known as the Desert Protectors and, in name, would be different than the MOD or MOI—the Army or the police.[110] At the operational level, General Vines, commander of MNC-I, sensed this changing environment and anticipated the opportunity. In conversation with Colonel Kevin McDonnell, incoming commander of the CJSOTF-AP, in May 2005, they discussed the redeployment of ODAs into Al Anbar to work with the tribes, specifically in Al Qaim and the Corridor.[111]

Although the MNF-W leadership was still engaging the tribal leaders who had fled to Jordan, subordinate commands were reticent to pursue on-the-ground contacts. As an example, at the tactical level, it was not until

August 2005 that Colonel Davis saw the policy change in AO Denver and felt authorized to work with the tribes.[112]

On 15 September 2005, General Casey and Dr. Dulaymi signed the Memorandum of Understanding "Concerning Training and Equipping the 'Desert Protectors.'"[113] The wording of the MOU implied that both the GOI and Coalition recognized that they were working with tribal militias in Al Qaim:

> This MOU is effective for incorporation of the "Desert Protectors" into the Iraqi Armed Forces. It neither states nor implies any commitment to integrate *other* [italicized for emphasis] tribal or militia units into the Iraqi Armed Forces.[114]

Although the MOU did not commit to integrating other tribal or militia units, the program did not limit the recruitment of the Desert Protectors to Al Qaim district. This would eventually be expanded to other areas of Iraq. Operational and tactical events leading up to the signing of the MOU and the recruitment and deployment of the first Desert Protectors are provided below.

Changing the balance: Troop increases and SOF re-entry to AO Denver

In the summer of 2005, General George Casey visited Colonel Davis. "He got it!" Davis recollected—Casey understood what was happening on the ground, and gave Davis additional forces to ensure RCT-2 had the resources necessary to support the National Referendum in October and elections in December.[115]

General Casey understood the importance of the WERV (and Tal Afar) long before his visit in the summer. The Coalition saw the increase of suicide bombers and foreign fighters traveling the WERV from Syria to Baghdad in the May/June timeframe almost immediately after Al Jaafari was installed as the Prime Minister. Concerned that the influx of fighters would affect the National Referendum and elections, the Coalition implemented the WERV campaign, moved a brigade up to Tal Afar, and then executed the Tal Afar Campaign in September.[116]

What started as 3,200 Marines and Sailors on an economy of force effort in February 2005, grew to 14,000 by September 2005 and comprised U.S. Marine, U.S. Army, and Iraqi security forces.[117] Colonel Davis now had the

force structure to initiate a combined, permanent persistent presence in the major population centers of the WERV.

August/September also brought the return of CJSOTF forces in the form of an Operational Detachment Bravo (ODB) and attached ODAs. Special Forces (SF) had been absent from the WERV for almost a year, and the detachments that had been there previously were redirected to Baghdad due to a greater need.[118] The ODB, commanded by Major Martin Adams, had its headquarters at Al Asad. Under its control were three ODAs: 545, 555, and 582. Their mission was to work with the tribes to help them secure their own areas.[119] (See Figure 6 modified line and block chart for the configuration of the CJSOTF and relationships among organizations.)

Major Adams sent ODA 545 to operate in Hit, where the previous team had successfully worked with the Albu-Nimr tribe. ODA 555 deployed to Hadithah, and ODA 582 to Al Qaim to work with one of the major tribes, the Albu-Mahal. Major Adams understood there were potential vulnerabilities, and potential opportunities, in the Albu-Mahal tribe worth exploring.[120]

In addition to the ODB and ODAs, other SOF elements (national) were targeting the insurgents in the area. According to Colonel Davis, the work that the SOF and RCT-2 were doing was mutually reinforcing:

> Was it SOF in support of general purpose forces? Or was it general purpose forces in support of SOF? Who really cares? The bottom line is you need to focus on: What's the plan? Are we getting it … What's the mission? Focus on the mission. Don't worry about who gets credit. Leave your ego at the door. Are we moving the ball forward? Are we killing bad guys? Are we taking care of the people?[121]

The creation of the Desert Protectors

Captain Joe Connolly, commanding ODA 582,[122] arrived in Al Qaim in August 2005, around the same time that Mahalawis were fleeing from AQI. Captain Connolly's mission was broad and nebulous: Make life better for the Iraqis. He recalled the conditions at Camp Gannon on his arrival as far from optimal: "We got hit with about everything the insurgents had—small arms, machine gun, rocket propelled grenades, mortar fire—it was not a contested area, the insurgents owned it."[123]
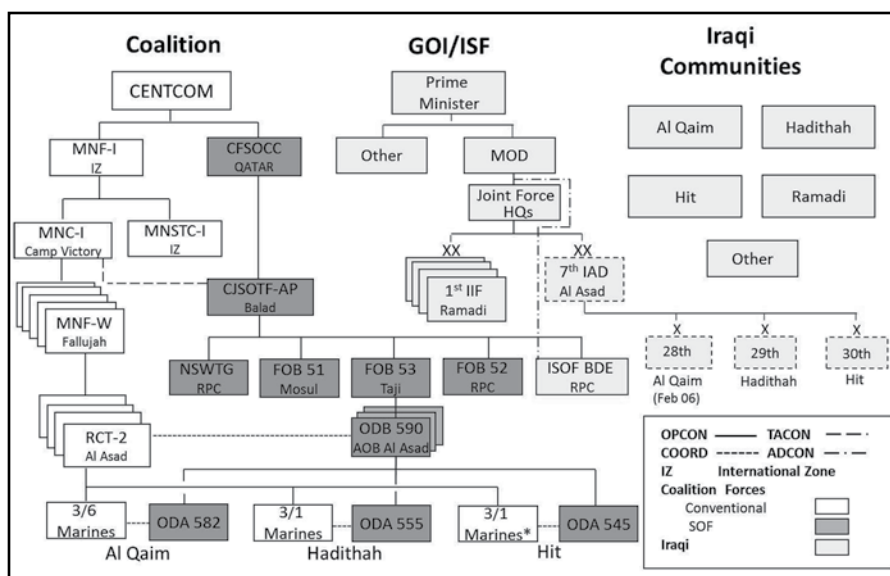
Figure 5. Modified Line and Block Chart on 15 September 2005.
Source: Dr. William Knarr[124]

At a safe house in the vicinity of Camp Gannon, Captain Connolly discussed recruitment with representatives of the Albu-Mahal tribe. At that time the only takers were the Mahalawis: They had already committed themselves by attacking AQI and were marked men. The remaining tribes were too intimidated or had already sided with AQI.

In addition to volunteers from Al Qaim area, a team representing the GOI and the Coalition arrived by helicopter in Akashat in September to vet several hundred Albu-Mahal tribesmen for enlistment into government service. This operation led to identifying a number of individuals who ended up becoming the first Desert Protectors platoon. The Desert Protectors were the first Sunni tribal militia endorsed by both the GOI and MNF-I. It was the first time that a tribe provided recruits who would be inducted into the Iraqi Security Forces used to fight AQI. According to Colonel Ahmad Jelayan Khalaf, Desert Protectors commander, 279 were deemed fit and inducted into the Desert Protectors. Of those, 89 were transported to the East Fallujah Iraqi Compound for training by SOF. They could only take a portion of the tribesmen at a time in order to leave enough men to protect the tribe from insurgents while their comrades were being trained.[125]

In the meantime, as Desert Protectors were being recruited, vetted, and trained, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines (3/6) assumed responsibility for Al Qaim District. Lieutenant Colonel Dale Alford, 3/6 commander, arrived with an experienced unit and an aggressive plan and approach to liberate the district from the grips of AQI. He also brought additional resources, a result of the plus up to RCT-2. Those resources included 1st Battalion, 1st Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division (1/1/1st IAD), an experienced Iraqi unit that had fought in *AL FAJR* in November 2004 and later in Mosul. Lieutenant Colonel Alford had the resources to establish a combined persistent presence within the population centers—the key terrain.[126] He immediately executed Operation IRON FIST during 1-7 October 2005 to catch the insurgents off guard. Now designated Combined Task Force (CTF) 3/6, they attacked from east to west through the town of Sadah and eastern Karabila, and stopped at the Emerald Wadi east of Husaybah (tip of the striped arrow in Figure 6). They subsequently built four positions near or within the population centers to be "among the people." They left a platoon of Marines and Iraqis in each—and they weren't leaving. The only thing Alford didn't have at the time was local support to provide intelligence and lead his forces to those insurgent sanctuaries—that was the mission of the Desert Protectors. They would be ready to support the next assault, a regimental operation to take back Al Qaim—Operation STEEL CURTAIN.
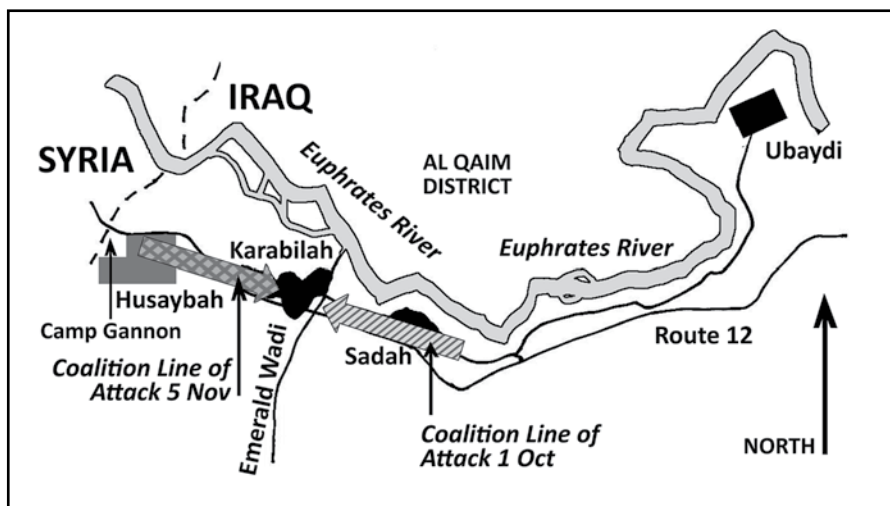
Figure 6. Western section of Al Qaim District. Source:
U.S. Special Operations Command Graphics

At the operational level, the Coalition recognized the value of the Desert Protectors program in providing the Sunni population a palatable option to partner with the Coalition and GOI that did not force them into an Army with associated out-of-area deployment obligations.[127] Sunni tribal leaders were still very much concerned that committing husbands and sons to the Army could be doubly tragic: 1) They could be signing their death warrants by having them join what was perceived as a Shia-dominated force and end up serving in a Shia area that would immediately make them a target, and 2) It would take them away from the local area and reduce those resources needed for local protection. As such, the 30 October 2005 MNF-I planning directive encouraged the expansion of the Desert Protectors, expanding the outreach program to draw Sunnis into the political process, and directed the development of an amnesty program to include a major detainee release section.[128]

At the national level, 15 October 2005 brought the constitutional referendum. The referendum passed at the national level with two-thirds of the provinces voting "yes" to adopt the constitution. Al Anbar was one of two provinces voting against its adoption with 252,011 residents voting "no," 7,908 voting "yes," with a total count of 259,919 votes. Although the referendum passed, the number of Anbaris voting was considerably higher than during the January 2005 elections.[129] This met a Coalition campaign objective of drawing the Sunni population into the political process—giving them an alternative to the insurgency. The strategic objective was successful National elections on 15 December 2005.

First employment of the Desert Protectors: Operation STEEL CURTAIN

CTF 3/6 had positioned forces on the east side of the Emerald Wadi at the conclusion of IRON FIST and continued to engage the enemy in Karabilah on the west side of the wadi—the enemy expected the Coalition to continue the assault from the east.[130] Instead, CTF 3/6, supported by the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit's (MEU) Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines (BLT 2/1), each with elements from the 1st Brigade, 1st Iraq Army Division (1/1 IAD) and Desert Protectors, repositioned from Camp Al Qaim to the Iraqi/Syrian border where they would assault east through Husaybah

and Karabilah (the checkered arrow in Figure 6).[131] The RCT mission statement follows:

> At 0500 5 November, RCT-2 conducts Joint / Combined COIN operations to isolate and clear Husaybah, Karabilah, Ubaydi, and Ramana IOT defeat AQI forces, establish persistent presence, disrupt insurgent activities, facilitate Iraqi restoration of the border and set conditions for national elections in Al Qaim region.

On 5 November, CTF 3/6 and BLT 2/1 assaulted into Husaybah and the area known as the "440 District" southwest of Husaybah, respectively. The 3rd Battalion of the 504th Infantry Regiment (3-504) inserted by helicopter to the north of the river into the Ramana area, a known insurgent sanctuary.

It took CTF 3/6 and BLT 2/1 the next seven days to clear the Husaybah-Karabilah-Sadah area of insurgents despite having the element of tactical surprise. This was a sophisticated enemy. The insurgents wore Kevlar helmets and body armor and fought with a degree of discipline that reflected advanced military training. All of the main roads and avenues of approach were laced with IEDs. Residential buildings were mined in order to target Coalition forces as they breached and cleared rooms. After engaging Coalition forces and encountering superior firepower, insurgents generally broke contact and conducted coordinated withdrawals to the east or discarded evidence of their actions and attempted to blend in with the population. The enemy clearly knew what it was doing and how to do it.[132]

But blending in with the population was difficult, if not impossible, since the Desert Protectors were now part of, and/or leading the formations. Captain Connolly recalled that the Desert Protectors were employed primarily as scouts. As such, they were broken down into small elements and embedded with regular Iraqi Army and Marine units. In this role they were invaluable to the operation.

Major Mukhlis Shadhan Ibrahim al-Mahalawi, commander of the Desert Protectors, explained that his mission had three primary stages.

The first stage was characterized as Intelligence Support. According to Major Mukhlis, "During the first stage we gathered a lot of intelligence like where the terrorists were staging, where their operations center was, where did they plant IEDs?" During the second stage they fought along-side the Coalition forces and acted as scouts, directing them to potential hot spots,

caches, and sanctuaries. Major Mukhlis described the third stage as human intelligence. During the third stage they were used to identify insurgents.

> We were the only ones who could identify people captured by the U.S. Forces. Somebody could be a prince or an emir [among the bad guys] … we knew who was the prince, the emir, and who were the assistants. It was our job to identify them.[133]

However, according to Captain Connolly, there were some negative aspects associated with employing such a local unit:

> The Albu-Mahals were massacred. If you have people who lost family members and they know that somebody else from another tribe was responsible for it, you have to keep a close eye to make sure there aren't any reprisals for past actions.
>
> You also want to make sure that there's no perception that these guys are the new ones in charge and you guys [the other tribe] are going to be squeezed out. A lot of times in dealing with tribes, there is a zero sum game. [They think] that the Albu-Mahals are doing well at the expense of the Karbulis and Salmanis. It's definitely a matter of appearing to be doing the right thing and not just doing the right thing. Perceptions go a long way.[134]

Operation STEEL CURTAIN ended on 22 November 2005. By late November, CTF 3/6 had constructed 16 Battle Positions in the area from Husaybah to Ubaydi. Each position included Marines and Iraqis—normally a Marine platoon and an Iraqi platoon or company. Those positions were located in such a way that they would reflect combined, permanent, persistent presence. In other words, the Coalition and Iraqi forces were positioned to live among the people. As local areas were stabilized, a number of the original Desert Protectors were inducted into local police forces; others were retained as part of the scout unit for the Iraqi Army unit that was deployed to the area.

Eventually the remaining members of the Al Qaim Desert Protectors unit quit, joined the local police, or, as a unit, were integrated as the 3rd Battalion of the 3rd Brigade of the 7th Iraqi Army Division and stationed in Al Qaim District.[135] Colonel Ahmad, commander of the Desert Protectors, became the battalion commander, and Major Muhklis was his battalion

intelligence officer. Colonel Ismael Sha Hamid Dulaymi, a member of the Albu-Mahal tribe, commanded the 3rd Brigade and in 2010, was promoted to Major General and commanded the 7th IAD located in Al Asad.

But it wasn't as easy as it may sound. There were perpetual resourcing issues, such as pay and equipment that had to be resolved with the MOD. Problems continued even after they became a numbered battalion in the Iraqi Army. Additionally, there was still a fear from the GOI that these Desert Protectors could go rogue and were therefore under constant scrutiny. As an example, both Colonel Ahmad and Major Mukhlis were accused by Iraqi intelligence of cooperating with terrorists. As a result, they both left the Army in October 2007. In May of 2010 Colonel Ahmad was cleared of those charges and allowed back into the Army. As of that time, Major Mukhlis was still under investigation by the administration.

The next chapter discusses the implementation of the Desert Protectors program with the Albu-Nimr tribe in the Corridor.

6. Expanding the Desert Protectors Program: The Albu-Nimr Tribe in Hit

> I want to create an environment where the Sunni population sees the Coalition as the guarantor of its participation in the political process … This will require: That all Iraqis have the opportunity to vote … expanding the Desert Protectors program … expanding political outreach to bring people into the political process and drive a wedge between them and AQI and insurgents. – General George W. Casey, Jr., Commander, MNF-I[136]

The success of the Desert Protectors program in Al Qaim prompted the expansion of the program into other areas along the Euphrates. The concept was to train and organize the Desert Protectors recruits into scout platoons to support each of the battalions in the Iraqi Army's 7th Division, projected for deployment throughout Al Anbar. The 7th Division, with three brigades, was authorized three battalions per brigade, each battalion with a scout platoon, totaling nine scout platoons. The plan was to deploy 3rd Brigade to Al Qaim, the 2nd Brigade to the Corridor, and the 1st Brigade to Ramadi.[137]

The next tribe prime for recruitment was the Albu-Nimr in the Hit area. The intent was to capitalize on the previous work by ODA 555. Master Sergeant Marchal had been preparing for this moment since his departure in July 2004. He had been tasked, along with Captain Brent Lindeman, to reactivate ODA 545 and redeploy to Iraq in May 2005.[138] The interim period between deployments (July 2004 - May 2005) allowed them to reflect on lessons from the 2004 deployment. It's also instructive to review ODA planning against the strategic and operational backdrop leading up to their deployment.

Strategic and operational guidance

At the strategic level, the 7 February 2005 updated Joint Mission Statement between the Embassy and the MNF-I outlined two major objectives for 2005; meet the remaining two milestones (the constitutional referendum

in October and National elections in December) listed in the UNSCR 1546 complemented by the TAL, and prepare the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Iraqi Transitional Government to assume the counterinsurgency lead.[139] As indicated before, the national elections in January 2005, the first of the three original UNSCR milestones, were considered successful. However, the low turnout in Al Anbar was reflective of two things; the turmoil and level of conflict in Al Anbar, as well as a Sunni insurgent encouraged boycott of the elections.[140] The goal was to increase Sunni participation for the October referendum and December elections through reconciliation and engagement and "driving the wedge. ..." Per MNC-I, the Desert Protectors program was specifically designed:

> To support the campaign objectives of Sunni inclusion and driving a wedge between Al Qa'ida in Iraq and the Iraqi people by conducting a special recruiting drive to bring Sunni tribesmen from the Western Euphrates River Valley into the Iraqi Army.[141]

Team planning and preparation

ODA 545 knew that success in continuing the counterinsurgency fight and driving that wedge depended on understanding and disrupting AQI's strategy. From previous experience (February-July 2004), AQI's strategy was based on several conditions; a Muslim population, social chaos, and economic failure. The population was readily available, and by undermining/destroying the tribal system they could transform the social structure into their envisioned caliphate. The Coalition unintentionally helped establish the conditions for economic failure through CPA orders one and two—the first calling for de-Ba'athification and the second dissolving the Iraqi Military. AQI simply needed to capitalize on those conditions to recruit and pay the locals. Next, AQI, through murder and intimidation, would make life so miserable for the population that in order to survive, they would accept any system that provided some form of stability.[142]

In order to defeat that strategy, Master Sergeant Marchal developed several ways of thinking about the insurgency. Those concepts included discrimination between the Salifist *Takfiri* and the nationalist insurgent, enemy-centric COIN, and a targeting strategy that included incentives as well as penalties.

> We'd started thinking of the insurgency as two lines of operations
> … The Salifist Takfiri … are religious nuts. You've got to kill those
> guys. There's no turning them. So we started looking at the Salifist
> Takfiri line and the nationalist insurgents.[143]

This was the practical application of locating potential fissures in the insurgency and then "driving that wedge." As an example, there had been a growing rift between the nationalists and the extremists such as the Association of Muslim Scholars and 1920 Revolutionary Brigade, and the AQI extremists respectively. Nationalist leaders understood that AQI did not have the best interests of the Iraqis in mind. For example, Dr. Hareth al-Dhari, the leader of the Association of Muslim Scholars, called by some the "spiritual head of the insurgency" in Iraq, was forthright in his condemnation of both AQI and America's occupation of Iraq.[144] His reputation is rooted in that of his grandfather, Sheikh Dhari, who led the resistance against the British occupation of Iraq in 1920. In an interview with the author, Hareth rejected "any organization that harms and punishes Iraqis." As far as he was concerned, this included America (he made a distinction between America and Americans) as well as AQI.[145]

The 1920 Revolutionary Brigade, closely connected to the Association of Muslim Scholars, was one of the largest nationalist insurgency groups in Iraq and derived its name from the Iraqi revolution against British occupation in 1920. It is a Sunni nationalist group with Islamic ties and was established in 2003. Sheikh Dhari's nephew of the same name was the leader of the organization until his assassination in 2007. Although initially supportive, the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade eventually broke ties with AQI due to AQI's brutality toward Iraqis—both Sunni and Shia.[146] Before deployment into the Corridor, ODA 545 recognized and studied that rift and planned to take advantage it.[147]

Additionally, Master Sergeant Marchal discriminated between what would popularly be known as "population-centric" COIN and "enemy-centric" COIN. This may seem odd since doctrine would later be published on the benefits of "population-centric" COIN.[148] But he pointed out that while the general mission of protecting the population may be appropriate for conventional forces, it was not effective for a 12-man ODA. The point was, to be most effective, an ODA had to be very precise in where they focused their skills. That included working by, with, and through a very select population that was more inclined to support the Coalition than the Salifist *Takfiris*,

could socially separate trusted members from questionable characters, possessed the capability and inclination to protect themselves, and, given the right incentives, would actively hunt and kill the enemy. The Albu-Nimr tribe (translated as Father of the Tigers), the dominant tribe along the Euphrates, fit that profile. In addition to ODA 555 setting the conditions for the tribe to "flip," a very vicious AQI convinced Sheikh Razak, the Albu-Nimr tribal leader, to declare himself pro-Coalition. He knew that the tribal structure and the life of a sheikh, as he knew it, was not part of AQI's vision for the future.

The Team also understood that part of the insurgent effort capitalized on an Iraqi need to feed one's family. At a 70 percent unemployment rate, $20 to $50 was an attractive incentive for digging a hole, putting in a bomb, and/or blowing somebody up. So employment into a security force that protected the local area, as well as participating in civil affairs projects to develop the community and employ locals, which provided an alternative to insurgent employment, were part of the plan.

Hence, the approach became enemy-centric: 1) Identifying the enemy, then 2) Turning those insurgents who could be turned (potentially the nationalists) against the insurgency and killing those who couldn't. Team members were also resigned to the fact that, "We can't kill our way out, but they [the Nimr] can."[149]

Identifying the enemy consisted of mapping the human terrain and understanding how the Iraqis identified themselves. This started with the family and clan, the tribe/confederations, "Muslims like me," and last as Iraqis, their national identity.

They then assessed the ODA's capability to affect/target the enemy's strategy by looking at it from the insurgents' perspective, through the lens of the Battlefield Operating Systems (BOS).[150] Of the seven BOS, they assessed that they could most effectively target the insurgent's use of combat service support. That was AQI's linkage to the people—the tribes—the Albu-Mahal, the Nimr, the Jugayfi, and others along the river. AQI was dependent on the rat lines/smuggling routes along the Euphrates, minimum wage intelligence sources and IED emplacers, safe houses, and in particular, the source of those services—again, the tribes. This is where the ODA put their energy; close down the combat service support mechanism and the rest of the BOS would follow.

Team deployment—conditions in Hit

Date	Commander	Unit
Sept–Oct 2005	Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Chessani	3rd Battalion, 1st Marines
Oct–Dec 2005	Lieutenant Colonel Gary Huffman	2nd Battalion, 114 Field Artillery
Nov–Dec 2005	Colonel James LaVine	13th MEU
Dec 2005–Feb 2006	Colonel Kenneth McKenzie	22nd MEU
Feb 2006–Feb 2007	Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Graves	TF 1st Battalion, 36 Infantry (TF 1-36)
Jan–Sep 2007	Lieutenant Colonel Doug Crissman	TF 2-7 Inf

Table 1. Unit presence in Hit September 2005–September 2007[151]

In August of 2005, ODA 545 was deployed to Hit and found conditions on the ground much worse than in 2004. In addition to the Coalition breaking contact with the Albu-Nimr tribe and the provisional company of tribesmen disbanding, the Corridor was in turmoil with conventional forces moving in and out of the area in 2004 to support operations in Fallujah and other areas. It was no better in 2005; within a six month period, from September 2005 until February 2006, five different units were assigned responsibility for Hit (see Table 1). On the one hand, they were there to provide security for the October referendum and December election. But on the other hand, the lack of continuity adversely affected intelligence collection and community relationships. It was not surprising the citizens of Hit did not trust the transient Coalition forces (see Table 1) and perceived the Coalition as noncommittal and disinterested in the community's wellbeing. As one U.S. Marine battalion commander described the economy of force effort in the Corridor, they were destined to a cycle of "clear, abandon, clear, abandon …" until they received the necessary force structure to maintain a presence and protect the population.[152] That wouldn't occur until February 2006 when a battalion was dedicated to the Hit Area.

Although the Hit community suffered from unpredictable Coalition support and AQI tactics of murder and intimidation, AQI atrocities in the neighboring community of Hadithah were worse and a vivid reminder of

how drastic the consequences could be. The insurgents had capitalized on the Coalition's "clear, abandon" strategy, overran the police station in the fall of 2004, and publicly beheaded those police who survived the assault at the city soccer stadium.[153]

In addition to the savagery of AQI, the police force in Hit had disintegrated, the 503rd ING had collapsed, suicide vehicle-borne IEDs were on the rise, and the Coalition had mistakenly killed Sheikh Razak in January 2005. Hence, the ODA was unsure of how the Albu-Nimr tribe would react to their return and was very cautious in their approach.

Master Sergeant Marchal started at the beginning and re-established the relationships he had previously built in 2004. "Nubs" was contacted and through him the team linked up with fellow tribesmen such as Sheikh Hatim al-Gaoud, Hikmat al-Gaoud, and Sheikh Al Jubayr al-Gaoud. Chief Warrant Officer 3 Tony Goble, assistant detachment commander for ODA 545, described their approach:

> We were seeing if their [individuals mentioned above] allegiance or alliance was pro-government. We spent a lot of time on that side [northeast] of the river camping out at night in the desert as our security posture. Then during the day, we'd go in, link back up with him, and continue some conversations to the point where we felt that they were on board with at least wanting to see the area change and wanting to bring security to the area.[154]

Although understandably reluctant to establish relations with the Coalition, the tribe didn't necessarily view the ODA in the same light as they did the rest of the Coalition forces. They placed more trust in the ODA. Additionally, the tribe was already marked as anti-AQI and conditions for them had significantly worsened in the past year. As an example, by destroying the bridge across the Euphrates from Hit to Hai al-Bekr, AQI was making a concerted effort to isolate the Albu-Nimr, who lived in the Phurat area on the northeast side of the river, from Hit on the west side (see Figure 7). This essentially blocked tribal movement into the Hit markets and prevented security forces (Coalition and/or ISF) located in Hit from responding to events in Al Phurat. In order to strengthen their relationship with the Albu-Nimr, ODA 545 moved their base of operations from Camp Hit to Al Phurat area. By October the ODA had regained the trust of the Albu-Nimr; but that trust didn't necessarily extend to the Coalition. It took some effort on the
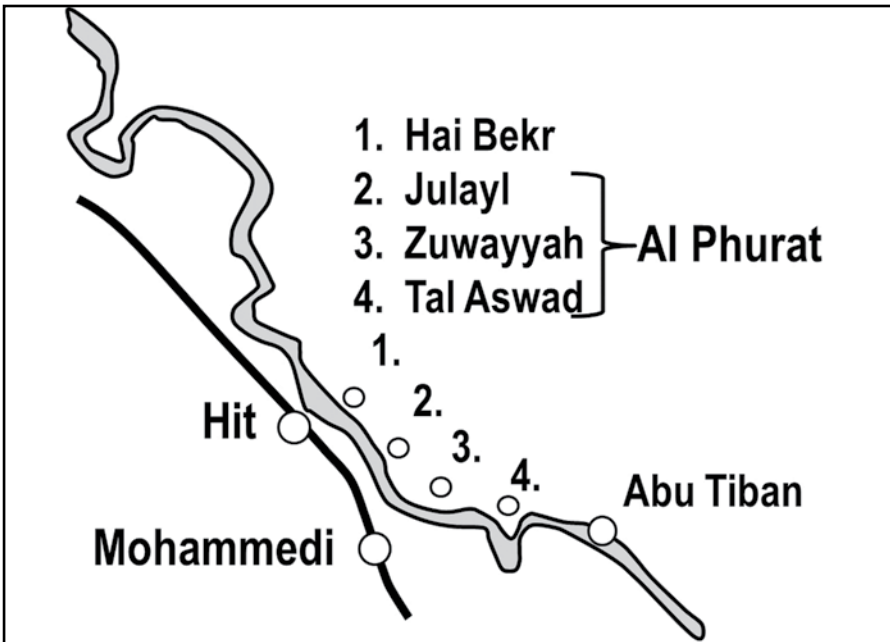
Figure 7. Hit neighborhoods north east of the river. Source:
U.S. Special Operations Command Graphics.

part of the ODA to convince Shiekh Kasam, who was Sheikh Razak's son and new leader of the tribe, to support this Shia government and Coalition initiative called the Desert Protectors.[155]

Desert Protectors

The program called for 200 recruits to be transported to the Fallujah area in November for a two-week basic training which the ODA had coordinated with the tribe. The 2nd Battalion, 114th Field Artillery of the Mississippi National Guard was the battlespace owners and were tasked to secure the area to include the landing zones and assembly area for the recruits. The Marine air wing from Al Asad would provide helicopters to transport the recruits. Unfortunately, on the day of transport, the assembled recruits waited at the landing zone, but the airlift was postponed; the recruits were told to return the following day. That night insurgents mortared several Albu-Nimr villages. The next day, the tribe could only muster 30 members to support the program. The rest of the manpower was needed to defend the villages in the event of an insurgent attack. The MNC-I and the Marines saw

this as a lack of support by the tribe for the program. The tribe saw this as just another example that they couldn't trust the Coalition.[156]

As RCT-2 gained additional forces during the fall, and as the MNC-I increased security for the coming elections, the 13th MEU arrived to support operations in the area. This coincided with the first platoon of Desert Protectors returning from training. Their first priority was to clear the Hai al-Bekr area and reopen the bridge. This allowed the Albu-Nimr tribal members access to Hit markets, security response forces, and polling stations. The Desert Protectors were instrumental in guiding the Coalition forces through the clearing operations. In doing so, they also left the Albu-Nimir of the Al Phurat area to police their own and excluded them from the clearing process. This reinforced relations between the tribe, the GOI, and Coalition. Additionally, on 15 December the Desert Protectors provided security and escorted convoys of approximately 1,500 voters from Al Phurat area to voting stations in Hit for one of the first successful area elections. Not only did the Albu-Nimr reap the benefits of the Desert Protectors securing their own areas, but the other communities started to see the benefits as well, as evidenced by the subsequent increase in the number of volunteers for the program.

The ODA spent its remaining months in Iraq strengthening the linkage between the tribe and the GOI, building that legitimacy for the GOI. But there were still challenges—pay being one of the biggest. Despite missing months of pay at a time, the Desert Protectors continued to support security efforts in the area. Their mission, status, and organization changed over the next year and they lost their identity as Desert Protectors. But the program was never intended to be permanent; it was a temporary fix, with the members eventually destined for transition into the police or the army. Many had the opportunity to transition to police as police stations were built in local areas (with the persistence of the ODAs). However, the Desert Protectors program never seemed to gain the success of its brethren in Al Qaim. Potential reasons for that will be discussed in the next chapter. The next chapter also discusses why the program was never implemented in Ramadi.

7. Discussion: The Rest of the Story

The Desert Protectors, as a program, was tremendously successful in Al Qaim, marginally successful in the Corridor, and nonexistent in Ramadi. That will be discussed later. However, as also indicated, its value lay strategically in the policy change, operationally in the capability for tribes to secure their own areas, and tactically in its success in Al Qaim as the first significant uprising of a tribe to partner with the Coalition and GOI against AQI. But the movement didn't stop there.

The spread of the Awakening movement to Ramadi in late 2005

This movement, this spirit of uprising against AQI, spread from west to east along the Euphrates from Al Qaim to the Corridor to Ramadi. Brigadier General Reist characterized it as "a wave coming ashore, not a singular event in any way, shape, or form." The wave, in this case, began in Al Qaim during the summer and fall 2005. It followed the WERV to the area around Al Asad in the Corridor. With resistance to AQI emerging in Baghdadi, and generally in Hadithah and Hit, AQI was running out of places to operate and hide. It migrated/maneuvered further east to more favorable terrain in the Ramadi area.[157]

The Coalition had set the conditions for this to occur. The MNF-I's strategy to increase security and close off, or at least disrupt AQI foreign fighter and resource flow down the Western Euphrates, helped set the conditions for successful elections in December of 2005. As a result, there was an 86.4 percent voter turnout rate in Al Anbar in, an incredible increase over the 1 percent in January.[158] Even the elections in Ramadi were considered a success. According to Colonel John Gronski, commander, 2nd BCT, 28th Infantry Division:

> The elections in December of 2005 were a huge success; approximately 60 percent of the voting population of Ramadi voted on 15 December 2005, compared with the fewer than 2 percent who voted in January of that year. This was because the local leaders and Imams,

reassured by our continued presence and success, and believing in our credibility, publicly supported the election.[159]

In addition to the emphasis of operational support to the elections, Sunni leaders generally were more inclined to participate in the political process. In hind sight they saw their boycott of the elections in January 2005 as a miscalculation; they now realized that the political process was a better alternative to AQI's anarchy and growing brutality.[160]

Colonel Gronski saw this changing attitude and developing relationship as an opportunity to increase police recruitment within the city. Through careful reconciliation of key issues within the city, relations continued to improve, and the tribal leaders committed to supporting a police recruitment drive scheduled for early January 2006 at the glass factory in Ramadi.[161]

In addition to this developing relationship and increased support for the political process, there was a growing rift between AQI and the nationalist insurgent groups. The leaders from the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade, the largest nationalist insurgency group in Iraq, were seeking political reconciliation as well as actively targeting AQI in the city (much the same as Captain Lindeman detected in Hit in early 2005). According to Major Alfred Connable, senior intelligence analyst at MEF from 2005 to 2006, Sheikh Nasser al-Fahadawi, linked to the insurgency, was adamantly opposed to the Coalition in 2004. But by 2005 he grew tired of the violence and joined together with Mohammed Mahmoud Latif, an Islamic scholar and leader in the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade, to support the December 2005 elections. Additionally, they put together a small coalition of other tribal leaders and former senior officers of the old Iraqi Army, known as the Anbar People's Committee, to oppose AQI.

AQI also sensed this "sea change in attitudes" throughout Al Anbar.[162] As a result, their situation had changed drastically for the worse. They had lost in the west, were highly contested in the Corridor, and obstructed in the east by Coalition and Iraqi security forces in Fallujah. Bookended by Al Qaim and Fallujah, heavily challenged in the Corridor, and with a growing and more competent ISF, the insurgents saw Ramadi as a last major opportunity for success in Al Anbar. Essentially, Ramadi was AQI's Alamo. But AQI won the first round as they focused their energy and brutality on all the dissenters in the provincial capital.[163]

The police recruitment at the glass factory in Ramadi, fully supported by the tribal leaders, had every appearance of a success. In the four days of recruitment, more than 1,000 Iraqis showed up to apply. As one candidate said, "The sheikhs themselves told us to come, that it would be all right." Lieutenant Colonel Michael McLaughlin, the brigade key leader engagement officer, saw this as a turning point for Ramadi, saying, "We are making history here."[164] Unfortunately on the fourth and final day of recruitment, a suicide bomber in the lineup outside the wall detonated himself, killing 56 Iraqis and two U.S. military service members, including Lieutenant Colonel McLaughlin, and wounding over 60 people.[165] Additionally, AQI started targeting anti-AQI tribal leaders, assassinating Sheikh Nasser on 18 January 2006, forcing Latif to flee to Syria, and killing approximately 50 percent of the Anbar People's Committee leaders.[166] By February/March 2006 Ramadi became known as the worst city in Iraq, and this Anbar-wide movement to rid itself of AQI ground to a halt. The point is, contrary to opinion otherwise, the movement did spread; however, AQI outmaneuvered the Coalition.[167] Preempted by the insurgency, the Coalition missed an opportunity to fully partner with the Iraqis (condition 3) to secure Ramadi. It was not that the movement that started in Al Qaim lost traction; it was that the Coalition wasn't aware of the movement, didn't recognize the growing threat, and/or was overly optimistic with the ISF's capability to maintain security.

According to DOD news releases and the 20 December 2005 MNF-I Campaign Progress Review, MNF-I was optimistic with the developing ISF capability and increased security as reflected during the 15 December elections. In fact, they were so impressed with the development of the ISF that the intent was to reduce Coalition forces in Iraq by two combat brigades. Ramadi was considered as part of that force reduction, that is, the 2nd BCT, 28th Infantry Division, might not be backfilled when they departed in June 2006.[168] Despite the missed opportunity, there continued to be a linkage among events in Al Qaim, the Corridor, and Ramadi.

Another opportunity in Ramadi

The opportunity wouldn't present itself again until the summer of 2006 with the arrival of the 1st BCT, 1st Armored Division, known as the Ready First Combat Team (RFCT). The Ramadi awakening was dramatic and—as characterized by Colonel MacFarland and Major Niel Smith in their article for

Military Review—a turning point for Al Anbar. Its success was made more dramatic by comparison to other areas in Al Anbar.[169] Ramadi had become the sanctuary; the Caliphate. The extremists had to be decisively defeated in Ramadi. The rest of Al Anbar could not improve without Ramadi "catching up." And it did—dramatically. Its eruption coined *Al Sahawa* by Sheikh Sattar Albu-Risha, and energized by him and his uniting of the Ramadi area tribes against AQI, quickly surpassed and accelerated improvements in neighboring communities such as the Corridor. It's important to note that they also discovered the key to local security was through the tribes and securing tribal areas first.[170] Per Lieutenant Colonel Lechner, the RFCT's approach:

> … was to have their [tribal] men join the IPs [Iraqi Police] where they would be paid, trained, and equipped and they would be used firstly to secure their own tribal neighborhoods. This was a clear deviation from the MEF and MNFI plan, but was immediately successful and took off like wildfire.[171]

This was different from the institutional approach in that they were now recruited to first secure their own communities rather than somewhere in Ramadi, a city of 450,000 people. The placement of the stations also deviated from the plan which dictated the location of each police station: It was now where the tribal leaders recommended they be located rather than according to an MOI master plan.[172]

It's not the intent of this monograph to tell the story of the Ramadi awakening—it's an incredible story and deserves much more than can be conveyed here. But, it's important to dispel notions that community/city awakening movements were not linked. That will be discussed further in the next section.

Themes

The purpose of this section is to address the three contentions listed in the purpose statement in Chapter 1.

1. The Anbar Awakening movement started with the development of the Desert Protectors program in Al Qaim.

This monograph contends that the Awakening movement within Al Anbar, the partnering of the Sunni tribes with the Coalition and the GOI to fight AQI, started in 2005 with the development of the Desert Protectors program in Al Qaim.

Most accounts of the Anbar Awakening cite Sheikh Sattar's 14 September 2006 proclamation and the incredible turnaround in Ramadi and subsequently Al Anbar as the beginning of the Anbar Awakening movement. Many accounts recognize that the first significant uprising of a tribe against al-Qaeda and their partnering with the Coalition to fight al-Qaeda was in Al Qaim with the Albu-Mahal. However, no accounts attribute the beginning of the Anbar Awakening to the Desert Protectors program or show that Awakening events were linked.

This section discusses the role of the Desert Protectors as a stepping stone to the Awakening. Contention three below will address the linkage among the events: The Desert Protectors program, the partnering of the tribe with the Coalition and GOI in Al Qaim, events in the Corridor, and those in Ramadi.

U.S. policy in Iraq began to change in May 2005 with the arrival of Zalmay Khalizad, an advocate of Sunni engagement, the standup of the Tribal Engagement Cell, the support of former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, and the MNF-I emphasis on Sunni outreach. On the security side, MNF-I issued a fragmentary order in July 2005 increasing the number of troops in the WERV by four-fold—according to Colonel Davis from 3,200 to 14,000—that included Iraqi as well as Coalition forces. Conditions were being set for an awakening in Al Qaim: Policy change; sufficient forces were allocated, both Coalition and Iraqi, to provide combined permanent, persistent presence; and a tribe that turned to the Coalition and GOI for help.

The 15 September 2005 memorandum between General Casey and Minister of Defense Dr. Dulaymi provided the basis for bringing together the tribe, the Coalition, and the GOI to fight AQI. As such, it officially marked the beginning of the Anbar Awakening movement. It also opened the discussion (previously closed) on whether or not forces, in particular conventional forces, could work with the tribes to meet security requirements. It provided a creative way of meeting the needs of all parties to include working within

the rules of "we will not arm tribal militias." This was a way of reconciling conditions three and four of the Anbar Awakening.

The development of the Desert Protectors also provided a model for thinking about future counterinsurgencies. Working with the tribes was not necessarily the only solution, but strategists and policymakers needed to recognize, understand, and consider where the power and influence lie within a community, and if possible, leave those options available to the operator. It's important to note that this initiative was developed by an Iraqi, Dr. Dulaymi, the Minister of Defense, who General Casey considered to be the Father of the Desert Protectors.[173]

2. The Desert Protectors program filled a necessary niche—a scenario that could present itself in the future.

The Desert Protector program filled a niche. This was a Sunni tribesman's opportunity to join an Iraqi Armed Forces unit whose purpose was to fight for his community without the prospect of a near-term redeployment out of the area. This was especially true at a time when local police either couldn't be hired or, if they were hired, couldn't survive. This is an important concept for the future fight against insurgencies.[174]

The Desert Protectors program was the best option for all parties. The Coalition needed locals to guide them through the area and point out insurgents. The GOI needed to control the program for legitimacy, and the tribesmen wanted to stay in the area to protect their families. This was generally a win-win-win situation. However, the challenges could be significant given the potential for abuse as pointed out by Captain Connolly: That the Desert Protectors, as Mahalawis, could "finger" competing tribal members for personal reasons, that is, retribution related to activities that were not insurgency connected.

That may be a consideration for the initial development of future security forces: Establish the scout platoon from locals who have the needed expertise in the area, and when the "scouting" is done, transition those members who wish to remain in the community to the local police force, which will provide it with local legitimacy; integrate the rest into a regular Army unit.

3. A narrative of events was connected by relationships.

The movement that started in Al Qaim was not "localized" as some would contend; it was part of a larger movement that spread throughout Al Anbar and that the Ramadi awakening was a significant part of that effort—not the start of it. Iraqi perspectives and relationships are key to understanding the connection between those Anbar Awakening events and movements.[175]

The narrative itself recognizes the importance of understanding relationships within society. That may sound trite, but there is an insistence by some that there was no linkage between Awakening events in Al Qaim, the Corridor, and Ramadi, i.e., that it was a disconnected narrative. As an example, the Marine Corps Al Anbar Anthology concludes that "This Awakening did not spread …" from the uprising in Al Qaim.[176] Another example is the interview with Mr. James V. Soriano, Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader, U.S. Department of State, who stated, "Sheikhs cooperating with the Coalition was nothing new. It happened first of all in al-Qaim, but that was a localized phenomenon. It didn't travel very far …"[177]

This paper contends that they weren't looking deep or far enough. The events in Fallujah, Al Qaim, the Corridor, and Ramadi were connected by relationships and not necessarily by events visible to an American.

As an example, just the involvement of the Al Gaoud clan in supporting and connecting anti-AQI events (Awakening relevant or not) is enlightening:

- In 2003 Sheikh Bezi Majil Nijris al-Gaoud approached the Coalition with an offer to provide security services in the Corridor if the Coalition would fund and arm the tribesmen.
- In 2004 ODA 555 worked with the Al Gaoud clan of the Albu-Nimr tribe in Hit to form a Provisional company of the Albu-Nimr to fight AQI. Major General Mattis credits Major Adam Such and the ODA with activities that would morph into the Awakening.
- In 2004 Talal al-Gaoud, son of Sheikh Bezi, a businessman in Amman, Jordan, was instrumental in setting up meetings in Jordan between the Coalition forces and Iraqi Sunni leadership to include meetings with the insurgents.
- In May 2005, Former Governor of Al Anbar, Fasal al-Gaoud contacted the Marines on behalf of the Albu-Mahal to help fight AQI. From 2005 to 2007 the Al Gaoud clan continued to work with the Coalition under the Desert Protectors program.

- On 14 September 2006, Al Gaoud representatives of the Albu-Nimr tribe participated in Sheikh Sattar Albu Risha's announcement of the *Sahawa* in Ramadi and were signatories to the emergency decree that signaled the beginning of the Ramadi awakening.[178]

The point is, events, whether they were relevant to the Awakening or not, were connected via family, clan, subtribe/tribal, and confederation relationships. Additionally, there were strong ties between the Albu-Risha and the Albu-Mahal. Dr. Dulaymi, the principal GOI coordinator for the Desert Protectors program, was Albu-Risha and Sheikh Sattar's uncle. He grew up next to Sattar's family's compound in Ramadi.[179] Recall that most of the Albu-Mahal tribesmen fled to Akashat, but some fled to the Ramadi area and Mahalawis were found later working with Sheikh Sattar and Sheikh Jassim in the Ramadi area awakening movement.[180] There were also offers of assistance between the tribes. Per Sheikh Ahmed, the Albu-Risha offered to help the Albu-Mahal in August 2005. Later in 2006, Sheikh Sabah al-Mahalawi met with Sheikh Sattar in Jordan to discuss the Albu-Mahal's success against AQI, AQI's grip on the Ramadi area, and to suggest how he might defeat AQI.[181] Additionally, the Albu-Mahal from Al Qaim were represented at the 14 September 2006 proclamations, as well as being a signatory on the decree.[182] There was also a tribal link between the commander of the 3rd Brigade, 7th IAD, assigned to Al Qaim, and the principal sheikh of the Albu-Mahal. Colonel Ismael Sha Hamid Dulaymi was Mahalawi and the cousin of Sheikh Sabah.[183]

Colonel Walker was convinced of this relationship between tribal members and Awakening events and attributed America's inability to recognize the relationships to "Coalition versus Iraqi" time. This is where the Marines saw the sequence of events in seven-month rotational increments. The Iraqis, on the other hand, visualized and connected events during the entire time frame.[184]

Another reason many failed to recognize the connections can be traced to the classified intelligence report leaked to the press in September 2006, two weeks before Sheikh Sattar announced the awakening in Ramadi.[185] It reported that the tribal system "wholly failed in AO Raleigh and Topeka and has only limited efficacy in AO Denver."[186] The only exception noted in the report was Fallujah, where the tribes still functioned despite "local politics in Al Anbar [being] anemic or dysfunctional due to insurgent intimidation …"[187]

While a number of Coalition senior leaders in Al Anbar characterized the report as basically accurate when read in its entirety, the report unfortunately set a despondent tone when select elements of the report were headlined in the media. The media report led many to conclude that there had been no success in Al Anbar. By March/April 2006, conditions were horrible in the heartland of Al Anbar, but the inference that there had been no improvement in other areas was wrong.[188]

Governor Mamoun Sami Rashid, Al Anbar governor during 2005–06, described it as a sequence of actions throughout Al Anbar that resulted in the awakening in Ramadi:

> When we started fighting al-Qaeda in Fallujah, the fight started to trickle down to Al Qaim, then Hadithah, then Anah, Rawah, and all these cities. The tribes, with the help of the coalition forces, they took the fight to al-Qaeda. The last round of fighting was in Ramadi.[189]

These events were connected through the "Sheikh network," that unofficial grapevine of social connectivity that Americans were not part of. Rather than the starting point, Sheikh Sattar's *Sahawa* was the product of relationships and accumulating events and movements.[190]

The point is many Americans perceive events in Ramadi as disconnected from previous events, or worse yet, don't recognize the relevance of previous events; however, the Iraqis saw and leveraged those connections and relationships. Those events began in 2004 with the Battles for Fallujah and sparked in Al Qaim in May 2005 with the first significant revolt of a tribe against AQI. The Awakening, however, as a movement (meeting all four conditions), officially began on 15 September 2005 in Al Qaim with the signing of an MOU. It surfaced in the corridor with the emergence of courageous Iraqi leaders such as Colonel Shaban in Baghdadi, Colonel Farouq in Hadithah, and members of the Albu-Nimr tribe in Hit; all these efforts were strengthened by the involvement of influential Iraqi tribes and families to connect the various events and movements, and continued with the *Sahawa* in Ramadi. Rather than the beginning, Sheikh Sattar's *Sahawa* was the accumulation and continuation of events; that resulted in a continuous rather than a disconnected story.

Some might wonder why the author devoted so much text to linking Awakening events and movements, and question why that discussion is relevant to SOF—because that's the difference between SOF and conventional

forces. Much in the same way that Master Sergeant Marchal meticulously mapped out his engagement strategy for his return trip to Iraq—SOF maps the human terrain, understands that relationships are important, and tries to visualize trends and connectivity over the long term.

As stated before, the Ramadi awakening was spectacular. As Ramadi continued to improve at an incredible pace, so did the rest of Al Anbar—and then Iraq.

Other observations

A number of other observations surfaced in the narrative and deserve further discussion.

A. Tale of two tribes (or the tale of three districts, Al Qaim, Hit, Ramadi)[191]

Why was the Desert Protectors deployment in Al Qaim to recruit the Albu-Mahal so successful as compared to the deployment in Hit to recruit the Albu-Nimr? Why were none recruited in Ramadi? There were a number of things that were different in the two deployments: Coalition priorities, unity of effort, and drastically different conditions.

i. Distribution of forces and combined, permanent, persistent presence

AO Denver was described as an economy of force area during the initial phases of OIF. That would continue through 2004 and into early 2005 as described by Colonel Davis.[192] His point was that resources in the form of a distribution of forces were being allocated to primary efforts elsewhere with his mission in AO Denver being a secondary or supporting effort. But that would change in the second half of 2005 as MNF-I sought to block the import of foreign fighters and IEDs across the Syrian border and down the Euphrates in preparation for the constitutional referendum in October and National elections in December.[193] Per Colonel Davis, his forces grew from 3,200 Marines and Sailors as an economy of force effort in February 2005, to 14,000 by September 2005.[194] He now had the force structure to initiate a combined, permanent persistent presence in priority areas. Al Qaim reaped the benefit of that force distribution. However, Hit continued

to suffer from insufficient and rapid turnover of forces in the area from September 2005 to February 2006.

ii. Unity of effort

Unity of effort was also different in Al Qaim versus Hit. The Coalition, the tribe, and the GOI fully supported the effort in Al Qaim. That, however, was not necessarily the case in Hit with the Albu-Nimr. The Albu-Nimr recognized that AQI was the enemy, but there is no evidence to support the contention that they trusted or saw the Coalition (other than the ODA) as a friend. After all, the Coalition had killed, albeit accidentally, their principal sheikh in Hit and, from the tribal perception, continuously abandoned the area. There is also no evidence that the Coalition forces in Al Anbar (other than the ODA) saw the Hit area as a priority or the recruitment of members of the Albu-Nimr tribe as a benefit. The success of recruiting and deploying one platoon of Desert Protectors from the Albu-Nimr tribe seemed to be the result of the work by the ODA and its relationship with the Albu-Nimr tribe and, in terms of the Desert Protectors program, didn't progress beyond that.

iii. Developing a police force

Although being a policeman was not an option for Mahalawis because they couldn't survive under AQI domination, if given the choice between being a policeman, Desert Protector, or soldier, most tribesmen would probably select "policeman" because it would allow them to remain local to secure their own communities and that was their first priority. In contrast, as a soldier they could be deployed out of their community into a Shia area. That could be risky for a Sunni soldier in a Shia-dominated army. However, the police force couldn't be developed until there was some semblance of security, normally provided by the Army, to protect the police from the more militarized insurgents. Per the 2014 edition of Field Manual (FM) 3-24/ Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-33.5, in Al Qaim after Operation STEEL CURTAIN and the use of the Desert Protectors:

The next step was a concerted drive to recruit tribesmen into the police force. The Marines solicited help from the Sheikhs to nominate men from their tribes, and started developing police stations

near the combat outposts. This would allow the Marines and Iraqi Army forces to partner with the local police forces in those areas and further engender trust and confidence from the local people.[195]

Per the 2006 version of FM 3-24 and MCWP 3-33.5, "The primary front-line COIN force is often the police—not the military."[196] The police are the ones who make contact daily with the people and, as such, are a critical component of the COIN fight. In Al Qaim, the establishment of the Desert Protectors was driven by circumstances. In Ramadi, a police force was a recognized institution that, given the right conditions, the communities were willing to support, whereas the Desert Protectors, as a concept, was an unknown.

This was one of the arguments in Ramadi, the scheduled location of the 1st Brigade of the 7th IAD and platoons 7-9 of the Desert Protectors. At a meeting in Ramadi in early 2006, an Iraqi community leader stood up and said, "We don't need desert protectors, we need people protectors," and from that moment on, there were no volunteers for the Desert Protectors program in Ramadi.[197]

B. SOF/conventional force integration and "becoming more SOF-like"

In this environment, SOF operations can't be discussed without also speaking of conventional force operations. They are so intertwined that if one is left out, the listener only hears one side of the conversation. The mission to establish the Desert Protectors may have been SOF unique, but the program and subsequent operations were joint, combined, and whole-of-government (U.S. and Iraqi) operations. Additionally, conventional forces were being asked to do more than traditional warfare. According to the Chief of Staff of the Army:

> Before the most recent set of conflicts, it was generally believed that cultural awareness was only required in select Army units, such as Special Forces or Civil Affairs. Recent history has made clear that we need expanded levels of cultural and regional awareness in *all* Army units.[198]

That was reinforced by Lieutenant General Cleveland's proposal, "recognizing special operations as an Army core competency." This includes

"working by, with, and through regional allies, partners, and host-nation forces."[199] Although Cleveland speaks of this in terms of managing conflict, it has applications here. In the case of the Desert Protectors the concept went beyond SOF and transitioned into the realm of conventional forces. The transition was highly successful in Al Qaim. While SOF operations with the Albu-Nimr in Hit were highly successful, they were only marginally successful in terms of the Desert Protectors program.

C. Neither MOD nor MOI, *Fatwa*, or survival

Dr. Dulaymi, at the national level, cites the tribes' aversion to being connected with the MOD or MOI. He also cites Dr. Hareth al-Dhari's *Fatwa* against those organizations as another reason why the tribes/tribesmen would not join a unit directly associated with either the MOD or MOI. Hence, the result was the standup of the Desert Protectors, different at least in name.[200]

At the tactical level, Captain Connolly contends: 1) the more practical reason for them to join was survival rather than any *Fatwa* or aversion to the MOD or MOI, and 2) for all practical purposes they were in the Iraqi Army; They were paid by the Iraqi Army, they wore Iraqi Army uniforms, and they were equipped by the MOD. Having said that, the Desert Protectors' made it clear to him that they joined the Desert Protectors to fight for their family and community and had every expectation to remain in that area. That is, they were different than the regular Army in that as Desert Protectors, they felt exempt from deployment out of their tribal area.

At the MNC-I level, Colonel Gerry Cummins would bring this closer to middle ground. According to Colonel Cummins, administratively the Desert Protectors were part of the MOD; the MOD eventually provided the pay and equipment and coordinated for their military skills training at the East Fallujah Iraqi Compound. However, the concept was, and recruits were told, that they would remain in their tribal areas. "That was a huge recruitment incentive," said Colonel Cummins.[201] According to interviewees and records, that commitment was honored.

Although Dr. Dulaymi's "neither MOD nor MOI" and *Fatwa* are important considerations, the more practical motive, and probably the driver at that tactical level, was personal and family survival.

D. Sanctuaries, the bad and the good

When thinking of sanctuaries in the context of insurgencies, one thinks of insurgent "free zones" where they are protected by international boundaries and can train, refit, and re-equip before going in, or returning to the fight. In Iraq, when looking at Al Anbar, that sanctuary was primarily Syria.

However, Jordan's role as a sanctuary served a very different purpose. A war like the one in Iraq needed a sanctuary like Jordan—a safe place where people from all sides, combatant and noncombatant, could meet and talk without security requirements dominating the agenda. Jordan afforded that location. Many notable tribal leaders, former Iraqi military officials, and former insurgents already lived in or found sanctuary in Syria or Jordan because living and meeting in Iraq was unsafe. Jordan also gave the Iraqis an alternate link to the outside world. Whereas the official link was via the Government of Iraq, Jordan became an unofficial conduit for plans, meetings, and activities to address or connect to foreign interests.

E. Not all awakenings are the same

The evolution of awakening events illustrates that not all awakenings are the same. Typically, people associate the awakening with the tribes, but in some cases, there may have been no dominant tribes, tribal leaders, or tribal militias willing to take charge.

As an example, according to Abd al-Hakim Muhammad Rashid, the mayor of Hadithah, "there was no popular militia to fight the *sahawa*" in Hadithah as there was in Al Qaim or Ramadi.[202] According to him, the leaders of the Iraqi Police (IP), the tribes, and the Coalition forces persuaded "the people [to] join the IP and resist the bad guys." The Iraqi given credit for beginning the security effort in Hadithah was Colonel Farouq Harden al-Jughayfi, the District police chief.

Baghdadi's awakening was also different in that a courageous Iraqi, Colonel Shaban Barzan Abdul Himrin al-Ubaydi went home to Baghdadi and decided to organize a police force to fight AQI. Additionally, in the city of Ramadi, the local leader who took charge was Lieutenant Colonel Salam al-Awani, the chief of police.[203] Despite a tribal leader not taking charge, most of those areas were dominated by a single tribe, and those police forces assembled were primarily from those tribes. As an example, the Jugayfi tribe was dominant in Hadithah, and the Albu-Awan was dominant in Ramadi's

city center (also the tribal affiliation for Governor Mamoun). A possible reason for leaders other than tribal sheikhs stepping forward was because of dissension within the tribe, that is, there may have been no tribal consensus until later in the community movement.

8. Summary and Conclusions

Most popular narratives of the Awakening in Iraq, the partnering of the Sunni Tribes with the Coalition and Government of Iraq to fight al-Qaeda, associate the beginning of the movement with Sheikh Sattar Albu-Risha's 14 September 2006 proclamation in Ramadi, where he coined the term *Al Sahawa*. However, Ramadi's awakening, as dramatic and significant as it was, resulted from an accumulation of events and movements. One of the most significant events was the establishment of the Desert Protectors on 15 September 2005 in Al Qaim with the signing of a memorandum that recognized the equities of the people, the Coalition and the GOI.[204] As an operational concept, it provided a creative way of linking the most effective means (the tribes) available to the tactical forces, to the ends, the national/strategic objectives ("to maintain domestic order" and build a legitimate "constitutional, representative government").[205]

However, within the GOI there was paranoia regarding the arming of Sunni tribes. Additionally, within the Coalition there was an unwritten policy discouraging Coalition forces from working with or through the tribes, preferring that they work directly with Iraqi government institutions instead. Unfortunately, Iraqi society had degenerated to such a point that many of those institutions did not exist at the local, district, or provincial level because of a lack of local security. At the tactical level, the practical solution to developing local security was to work by, with, and through the tribes as the only meaningful societal structure that existed in many areas of Al Anbar. Herein lays the dilemma at the tactical level: Unwritten policy and directed course of action versus a practical solution. The success of the Awakening movement was finding operational ways to link the ends or strategic objectives to the means available at the tactical level.

There are many perspectives on the development of the Anbar Awakening movement: descriptions, definitions, components, starting points, contributors, et cetera. With the benefit of hindsight, this monograph capitalized on those perspectives and characterized the Anbar Awakening movement as, "the partnering of the Sunni tribes with the Coalition and the GOI to fight AQI," and it consisted of four conditions, the first of which occurred in Fallujah in 2004.

By the summer of 2004, Fallujah became unbearable for its residents. They had come to understand through experience the horrors of living under AQI's extreme interpretation of *Sharia*. Instead of partnering with the Iraqi people to fight the occupiers, the extremists, led by the Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, demanded to lead the jihad with the intent of first destroying and then transforming the social fabric of the province. Notable Fallujah area residents such as Farhan De Hal Farhan, the future mayor of Al Qaim, fled but carried the message that these *takfiris*, those who accuse other Muslims of apostasy, were really the enemy of the Iraqi people. This realization and simple message was the first condition toward what would become the Anbar Awakening.

During the next two years communities, towns, and districts along the Euphrates would awaken to the fact that AQI was not their friend. They also soon realized that they could not defeat AQI on their own. The only way AQI could be beaten was for the Anbaris, like it or not, to partner with the Coalition. This was the second condition in the Anbar Awakening movement.

But there was a reciprocal requirement. The Coalition had to be willing to work with the local people; in most cases that meant working through the tribes. This was the third condition towards the Awakening.

One of the biggest challenges the Coalition faced was connecting the people to the GOI. After all, the Coalition was going to leave Iraq and it had to wean the people off Coalition support. Fostering the legitimacy of the GOI and developing that connection was the fourth and most difficult condition. This also introduced the dilemma: reconciling steps three and four, working through the tribes and developing the legitimacy of the GOI—seemingly contradictory means and ends.

Although many historians would describe the Albu-Mahal/AQI conflict in 2005 in Al Qaim as the first significant uprising of a Sunni tribe against AQI,[206] it was much more than that. It met all four of the above conditions to include legitimacy through the institution of the Desert Protectors program. As such, it was the beginning of the movement. Not only was the problem identified, a solution was developed and executed. The movement did not "move" forward until 15 September 2005.

The Albu-Mahal, in what would become a fight for survival, realized they could not fight AQI on their own and pleaded for help from the Coalition and the GOI. At the operational level, Colonel McDonnell and General Vines saw this as an opportunity, and during the summer of 2005, used the

redeployment of SOF to Al Anbar to capitalize on tribal dissatisfaction with AQI.[207]

The foundation for developing the partnership among the people, the Coalition, and the GOI was the Desert Protectors program: local tribesmen recruited, trained, organized, and deployed as scouts under the watchful eye and guidance of the CJSOTF in Iraq. Although tactical in nature it had strategic implications with changes in policy and strategy that eventually led to the Anbar Awakening movement.

Political conditions in 2003, 2004, and early 2005 were not conducive to working with or through the tribes in Al Anbar. However, that started to change in early 2005 with the arrival of Ambassador Zalmay Khalizad in May.[208] According to General Casey, "When Zal got there we started doing things [Sunni outreach] with [Major General Rick] Lynch and pulling things together." The purpose was to draw the Sunnis into the political process which they had boycotted during the January 2005 elections.[209] Although emphasis on Sunni engagement was a giant step in reconciling the ways of linking the strategic ends with the means, the people, it still fell short of working by, with, and through the tribes because of the paranoia associated with "arming militias."

According to the Minister of Defense, Dr. Dulaymi, Al Jaafari's biggest fear was that this Sunni force would "be trained and become a threat to the rest of Iraq."[210] To diffuse this perception, potential recruits needed to be vetted and drafted into government service. Dr. Dulaymi also had to convince the Albu-Mahal tribe to join with the GOI in some formal way. Although he cited their aversion to joining the MOD or MOI and a *Fatwa* issued by Dr. Hareth al-Dahri as principal reasons for their reluctance, the more practical reason was that they might be deployed to areas outside of Al Qaim. That is, the Mahalawis were more interested in recapturing and protecting their families and tribal areas than supporting a national vision of a united Iraq.[211] Hence, the Desert Protectors program, as executed, met the requirements for local security and was in line with the strategic intent.

Significance of the Desert Protectors

The 15 September 2005 memorandum between General Casey and Minister of Defense Dr. Dulaymi provided the basis for bringing together the tribes, the Coalition, and the GOI to fight AQI. As such, it met all four conditions

and officially marked the beginning of the Anbar Awakening movement. It also opened the previously closed discussion on whether-or-not forces, in particular conventional forces, could work with the tribes to meet security requirements. Specifically, it provided a creative approach to meet the needs of all parties to include working within the rules of "we will not arm tribal militias." This was a way of reconciling conditions three and four of the Anbar Awakening.[212]

The development of the Desert Protectors also provided a model for thinking about future counterinsurgencies. Not necessarily that working with the tribes was the only solution, but that the strategist and policymaker needed to recognize, understand, and consider where the power and influence lie within a community, and if possible leave options available to the operator.

The Desert Protectors program also filled a niche. This was a Sunni tribesman's alternative to joining an Army unit that would deploy him out of the local area. Especially at a time when local police either couldn't be hired or, if they were hired, couldn't survive. This is an important lesson for the future fight against insurgencies.[213]

Strategically, the Desert Protectors program reflected a policy and mindset change; operationally it expanded the options open to linking the people with the GOI by providing a capability for tribes to secure their own areas; tactically it was a tremendous success in Al Qaim. However, it was only marginally successful in the Corridor and nonexistent in Ramadi. Its success in Al Qaim was attributed to unity of effort; its priority in terms of available forces, both Coalition and Iraqi to implement a combined, permanent persistent presence; and the partnering with the tribes. It was marginal in the Corridor because it lacked unity of effort and Coalition priority. It was nonexistent in Ramadi because the Desert Protectors as an interim solution to a police force was not needed in Ramadi. They immediately recognized the value of "police protected by military forces." The solution that eluded Coalition forces in Ramadi was the "how," the operational concept of linking the use of the tribes at the tactical level to provide local security with the objective of "legitimacy" for the GOI at the national/strategic level, which will be further discussed.

The Desert Protectors enabled an Al Qaim awakening; Al Qaim events influenced the Awakening movement through the Corridor to Ramadi

The Desert Protectors program was a critical enabler to an Al Qaim awakening, but the movement didn't stop there. It wasn't localized; rather, it spread to other areas in Al Anbar to include Ramadi. That realization is reflected in the successes in late 2005 in drawing the Sunni community into the political process.

In terms of the democratic process and meeting National objectives, developing Iraqi army forces in Al Anbar, and the Anbar Awakening movement, 2005 was an incredible year. UNSCR 1546 and TAL milestones were successfully met: Direct democratic elections to form an Iraqi Transitional Government no later than 31 January, a general referendum to approve a constitution no later than 15 October, and elections for a permanent government to be held no later than 15 December 2005.[214] Not only were those milestones successfully met, the events themselves were judged to be successful nationwide with a 58 percent voter turnout in January, 63 percent voter turnout for the October constitutional referendum, and 75 percent voter turnout in December 2005.[215] More telling was the turnout in Al Anbar, with 1 percent in January, 32 percent in October, and 86.4 percent in December.[216] According to Colonel Gronski, the elections in December of 2005 in Ramadi were a huge success with approximately 60 percent voter turnout in December compared to fewer than 2 percent who voted in January of that year.[217]

The success can be attributed to two things: the emphasis on securing the elections and the changing attitude of the Sunni leaders, both tribal and religious. They were generally more inclined to participate in the political process. In hindsight they saw their boycott of the elections in January 2005 as a miscalculation; they now realized that the political process was a better alternative to AQI's chaos and brutality.[218] Not only were local tribal leaders supporting the process, but nationalist insurgency groups such as the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade also supported the political process and actively targeted AQI. The movement was alive! It started in Al Qaim in September, traveled from west to east through the Corridor and was evolving in Ramadi. Colonel Gronski, with the support of the Ramadi sheikhs, would capitalize on this developing situation by scheduling a police recruitment drive in early January.

A missed opportunity

The Coalition had set the conditions for this movement to occur. But they had also set the conditions for AQI's assault on Ramadi. As the insurgents were now being driven from Al Qaim in the west through the Corridor and blocked in the east by Coalition and Iraqi forces in Fallujah, they were channeled to Ramadi. But that's where they wanted to go anyway—their envisioned Caliphate, the provincial capital.

AQI also sensed this sea change in Iraqi attitudes. Hence, that is where they focused their attention. In early January 1,000 candidates showed up at the glass factory, one of the largest recruiting drives to ever occur in Ramadi. AQI targeted the event with a suicide bomber; killing 56 Iraqis, 2 Coalition military members, and 60 people injured. They then targeted those Sunni leaders such as Sheikh Nasser al-Fahadawi, Mohammed Mahmoud Latif, and members of Al Anbar People's Committee leaders. Nasser was assassinated on 18 January 2006, Latif fled and approximately 50 percent of the Anbar People's Committee leaders were dead within the next two months.[219] By February/March 2006 Ramadi became known as the worst city in Iraq and this Anbar-wide movement to rid itself of AQI ground to a standstill. The point is, contrary to opinion otherwise, the movement had spread; however, AQI outmaneuvered the Coalition. Preempted by the insurgency, the Coalition lost the initiative and missed an opportunity to seal this partnership with the Iraqis to secure Ramadi. It was not that the movement that started in Al Qaim lost traction; it was that the Coalition was overly optimistic of ISF capabilities and did not recognize/respond to the insurgent threat to Ramadi.

A different approach and another opportunity

This situation needed a different approach; it required more than working with the tribes to hold recruitment drives and fielding police across the city. The problem with the institutional or past approach was they couldn't guarantee the safety of the families, clans, and tribes.

Then 1BCT/1AD brought a new approach. They changed the recruitment process and incentives. The glass factory tragedy was deeply embedded in everyone's memory both in terms of location and process. Lieutenant Colonel Tony Deane, in coordination with Sheikh Ahmed Albu-Risha, convened the next recruitment drive at the Albu-Risha compound in the tribal area. Additionally, the recruits were moved the same day they were assembled.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Deane, this "only force[d] them to be brave once." Allowing them to go home and return in the future caused many to have second thoughts, in particular if the insurgency found out they had volunteered.[220]

The key to this, however, was the incentive. Colonel MacFarland knew he had to recruit police and he knew he had to work with the tribes to do that. The difference in the Ready First's approach from the institutional or previous approach was that the RFCT recruited police to first secure their own communities rather than another community somewhere in Ramadi, a city of 450,000 people. Additionally, they placed the police stations in locations recommended by the tribal leaders and not according to the MEF, MNC-I, or MOI master plan.[221] They linked the GOI (via an MOI sanctioned police force), at the national level, to the people (as represented by the tribes) at the tactical level, by creatively manipulating the "ways" (placement of trained policemen and police stations). This is not unlike Al Qaim and the development of the Desert Protectors in creatively developing a way to link the tactical mission of securing the population to the strategic objectives.

Community awakenings linked by methods and relationships

Despite contentions that the awakening in Al Qaim was localized and disconnected from the awakening in Ramadi, they were connected by methods employed and relationships. The methods employed in both Al Qaim and Ramadi recognized that the issue at the tactical level was local security and who best to take care of that than the people who lived there. So the ways were adjusted to link the ends, GOI legitimacy to the means, the people. That started with the Desert Protectors program in Al Qaim. However, conditions in Ramadi allowed the leadership to bypass that interim programmatic step and go directly to recruiting police and placing them in their own family, clan, or tribal areas.

Although Colonel MacFarland was basically unaware of the Desert Protectors program and events in Al Qaim, in hindsight he recognized that his "approach wasn't unprecedented, because Dale Alford [3/6 Commander] had done something similar with the Albu-Mahal tribe in Al Qaim." Having said that, MacFarland also cited a number of differences such as the uprising in Al Qaim consisted of a single tribe, the Albu-Mahal, and that the Albu-Mahal had "awakened" to regain the smuggling business that AQI had hijacked.[222]

However, there was a Coalition link between Al Qaim and Ramadi. Lieutenant Colonel Bill Jurney, Commander of 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, deployed to Ramadi in late September 2006 and before his deployment discussed the problem set with Lieutenant Colonel Dale Alford, a close friend and the battalion commander in Al Qaim in 2005/2006. He used some of the same techniques in Ramadi that Alford used in Al Qaim, such as living among the people; developing local police; and combined, permanent, persistent presence. According to Jurney, "A local security force is an insurgent's worst nightmare because they know who the bad guys are."[223] Additionally, police recruits from other areas imported to support operations in Ramadi just didn't have the incentives that locals would have that were fighting for their families.

The last of the three, but probably the most important, is Iraqi relationships. Those relationships were integral to connecting events from Al Qaim to Ramadi. Awakening events were connected through the "Sheikh network," that unofficial grapevine of social connectivity that Americans were not part of. The Iraqis saw and leveraged those connections and relationships during the entire timeframe despite the hiatus created by the missed opportunity in early 2006. Rather than the starting point, Sheikh Sattar's *Al Sahawa* was the product of relationships and accumulating events emanating from the movement that started in Al Qaim with the development of the Desert Protectors.[224]

Conclusions

The realization that AQI was not the friend of the Iraqi people began in Fallujah in 2004. However, the movement, "the partnering of the Sunni tribes with the Coalition and the GOI to fight AQI," started in Al Qaim in 2005 with the first significant revolt of a tribe against AQI and development of the Desert Protectors. The movement then emerged in the Corridor through courageous Iraqi leaders and tribes such as the Albu-Nimr; all this was strengthened by the involvement of influential Iraqi families, clans, and tribes to connect the various events and movements. Although the movement stalled in Ramadi in early 2006, it did not stop. In spectacular form the partnership achieved a turning point in Ramadi in the fall of 2006 and then in Al Anbar with most Anbaris choosing to side with the Coalition and GOI over AQI.

Rather than the beginning, Sheikh Sattar's *Al Sahawa* resulted from an accumulation of events and movements; as such, the Awakening became a continuous narrative influenced by relationships, experience, and techniques that started in Al Qaim in 2005.

Governor Mamoun Sami Rashid, Al Anbar Governor during 2005–06, described the sequence of actions throughout Al Anbar that resulted in the awakening in Ramadi:

> When we started fighting al-Qaeda in Fallujah, the fight started to trickle down to Al Qaim, then Hadithah, then Anah, Rawah, and all these cities. The tribes, with the help of the coalition forces, they took the fight to al-Qaeda. The last round of fighting was in Ramadi.[225]

The program that officially started the Awakening movement was the Desert Protectors, by changing the mindset and supporting an approach that focused on working by, with, and through the tribes in securing their local areas to meet strategic objectives. It provided a model, not a template, to conceptually reconcile seemingly competing and contradictory societal structures—tribal and government. Those tribal/Iraqi relationships connected the narrative. That is how the Desert Protectors program and Al Qaim awakening started the Anbar Awakening movement and influenced events in the Corridor and Ramadi.

Appendix A: Who's Who

Iraqi Interviewees

Abd al-Hakim Muhammad Rashid Muhammad al-Jughayfi, Mayor of Hadithah

Abdul Qadir Mohammed Jassim Obeidi al-Mifarji, General, Minister of Defense from 2006 to 2010, preceded by Dr. Sadun al-Dulaymi, Sunni Arab, born in Ramadi

Abdullah Jallal Mukhlif al-Faraji, Head of Sunni Endowment for Anbar Province, Regent Sheikh of the Albu-Faraj tribe; Ramadi City Council Member

Adel, Brigadier General, Commander 1st Brigade, 1st Iraqi Division

Ahmad Jelayan Khalaf, Colonel, former Desert Protector

Ahmed Bezia Fteikhan al-Rishawi, Paramount Sheikh of the Albu-Risha tribe, President of Muttamar Sahawat al-Iraq (MSI)

Ahmed Hamid Sharqi, Colonel, Chief, North Ramadi Police Precinct

Ayad Allawi, Doctor, Former Prime Minister of Iraq,

Babakir Badr-khan Shawat al-Zubari, General, Chief of Staff for the Joint Forces Command, Studied at the Iraqi Military Academy in Baghdad in 1969, served in the Kurdish Peshmerga 1973–91; Escaped to Iran as a political refugee in 1975; Acting Commanding General of Iraqi Joint Headquarters, 2004–05; Chief of Staff, Iraqi Joint Headquarters, 2005 to present

Bezi Mujjil Nijris al-Gaoud al-Nimrawi, eldest Sheikh of the Albu-Nimr tribe; one of the first tribal leaders to offer to arm tribesmen and support Coalition (Summer 2003); turned down by CPA over concerns of creating tribal militias; lives in Amman, Jordan

Farouq Tareh Harden al-Jughayfi, Colonel, Police Chief of Hadithah

Hareth al-Dhari, Doctor, Leader of the Association of Muslim Scholars (AMS) and Zobai tribe

Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Doctore, former Iraqi Prime Minister, April 2005 to May 2006

Ismael Sha Hamid Dulaymi, staff Brigadier General, Former Commander 28th Iraqi Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division

Jalal al-Gaoud, Iraqi Businessman from Hit, residing in Jordan

Jassim Muhammad Salih al-Suwaydawi, Sheikh of the Albu-Souda tribe

Kurdi Rafee Farhan al-Mahalawi, lower tier sheikh of Albu-Mahal tribe

Mahmood al-Janabi, a leader with the Jaish al-Islami (Islamic Army) insurgent group

Majed Abd al-Razzaq Ali al-Sulayman, Sheikh of the Dulaymi Confederation

Mamoun Sami Rashid Latif al-Alwani, former Governor of Anbar; Anbar Provincial Council Member; Chairman of the Provincial Council's Economic Committee

Mishan Abbas Muhammad al-Jumayli, Paramount Sheikh of the Albu-Jumayli tribe

Mohammed Al-Saady, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister and Chairman of the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation. Elected to the new Parliament.

Mukhlis Shadhan Ibrahim al-Mahalawi, Major, Desert Protectors commander

Nathem al-Jabouri, former member of AQI

Numan al-Gaoud, businessman and member of the Albu-Nimr tribe in Hit

Raad Majid Rashid al-Hamdani, Lieutenant General, Retired Republican Guard Commander; Leader of the FRE Movement to Reintegrate with GOI

Raja Farhan, mayor of Al Qaim

Sa'fa Al-Sheikh, National Security Advisor

Sabah al-Sattam Effan Fahran al-Shurji al-Aziz, principal Sheik of the Albu-Mahal tribe in Al Qaim

Sadun Juwayr Farhan al-Rishawi al-Dulaymi, Doctor, Former Minister of Defense 2005/ 2006, Doctorate in Social Psychology from United Kingdom's Keele University

Said Flayyah Othman al-Jughayfi, contesting Sheikh, Albu-Jughayfi, one of the top 17 influential tribes in Anbar, Hadithah

Sha'ban Barzan Himrin, Colonel, former Chief of Police in Baghdadi

Ali Hatim Abd al-Razzaq Ali al-Sulayman al-Assafi al-Dulaymi, Sheikh, President of the Common Council of Iraqi and Arab Sheikhs, Lineal Sheikh-in-waiting of the Albu-Assaf tribe, Founder of the Iraqi National Front

Tariq al-Abdullah al-Halbusi, Principal Sheik of the Halbusi tribe located in Fallujah

Thamer Kadhem al Tamimi, closely associated with JAI; one of the first and premier Sahawa leaders in Baghdad

Thamir Ibrahim Tahir al-Assafi, Doctor, Head of the Muslim Ulema Council (MUC) for Anbar and Senior Theologian to Sunni Waqf; Ramadi City Council member; Al-Anbar University (AAU) Professor of Religious Studies; Mutammar Sahawat al-Iraq (MSI) office of Religious Affairs

Thary Abed Alhadi al-Yousef al-Zobi, Deputy Governor, on the Awakening

Other Notables

Abdul Sattar Albu-Risha, Leader of the Awakening movement in Al Anbar Area, assassinated 13 September 2007

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Jordanian-born founder of Jama'at Al-Tawhid Wa'al Jihad (JTJ – Group of Monotheism and Holy War) (2003) and later al-Qaeda in Iraq (October 2004); killed in Coalition airstrike in June 2006

Faisal al-Gaoud, former Sheikh of Albu-Nimr; father of Sheikh Fasal

Fasal Rakan Nejris, Sheikh of Albu-Nimr tribe; appointed governor of Anbar by IIG November 2004; replaced as governor by Raja Nawaf Farhan al-Mahalowi (May 2005); Awakening Council leader; died 25 June 2007 in Mansour Hotel bombing

Hatim Razzaq, current Sheikh of Albu-Nimr

Hikmat Jubayir, mayor of Hit; Sheikh of Albu-Nimr tribe

Karim Burjis al-Rawi, former governor of Anbar Province (April 2003–August 2004); forced to resign after his sons were kidnapped; replaced by Mohammad Awad

Naim Abd al-Muhsin al-Gaoud, appointed by Coalition forces as first mayor of Hit (April 2004)

Raja Nawaf Farhan al-Mahalawi, appointed governor of Anbar by newly-elected provincial council (May 2005); kidnapped by extremist elements to influence Albu-Mahal to stop fighting AQI; found dead in a home after Coalition-insurgent fighting in the area; replaced by Mamoun Sami Rasheed

Talal al-Gaoud, son of Bezi al-Gaoud; worked with Marine engagements in Jordan in 2004; died suddenly in 2006

Appendix B: Abbreviations

ACR	Armored Calvary Regiment
AO	Area of Operation
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BLT	Battalion Landing Team
C2	Command and Control
CENTCOM	U.S. Central Command
CJSOTF	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force
CMATT	Coalition Military Assistance Training Teams
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
FM	Field Manual
GOI	Government of Iraq
HUMINT	Human Intelligence
IA	Iraqi Army
IAD	Iraqi Army Division
ICDC	Iraqi Civil Defense Corps
IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses
IG	Iraqi Government
IIG	Iraqi Interim Government
ING	Iraqi National Guard
IP	Iraqi Police
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ITG	Iraqi Transition Government
JAI	Jaish al-Islami [Islamic Army]
LAR	Light Armored Reconnaissance
LOO	Lines of Operation
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
MNC-I	Multi-National Corps–Iraq
MNF-I	Multi-National Forces–Iraq
MNF-W	Multi-National Forces-West
MNSTC-I	Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq

MOD	Ministry of Defense
MOI	Ministry of Interior
ODA	Operational Detachment Alpha
OIF	Operation IRAQI FREEDOM
OODA	Observe, Orient, Decide, Act
RCT	Regimental Combat Team
SEAL	Sea, Air, Land
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOTF	Special Operations Task Force
TF	Task Force
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USMC	United States Marine Corps
WERV	Western Euphrates River Valley

Endnotes

1. Colonel Ahmad Jelayan Khalaf, former commander, Desert Protectors, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, in Husaybah, Iraq, 18 April 2010.

2. This monograph uses the upper case *A* and/or *S* to describe the overall Anbar Awakening movement or *Al Sahawa*, which took place from 2004 to 2008 in Al Anbar. It uses the lower case *a* or *s* to describe those local movements to include the awakenings in Al Qaim and Ramadi. An alternative spelling is *Sahwa*.

3. Colonel Gary W. Montgomery and Chief Warrant Officer-4 Timothy S. McWilliams, Editors, *Al-Anbar Awakening, Volume II, Iraqi Perspectives, from Insurgency to Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009*, published by the Marine Corps University, 2009. Hereafter, this publication will be referred to as *The Anbar Anthology, Volume II*, 2009, p. 12, 13. "This Awakening did not spread …" from the uprising in Al Qaim. Another example is the interview with Mr. James V. Soriano Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader, U.S. Department of State who states, "Sheikhs cooperating with the Coalition was nothing new. It happened first of all in al-Qaim, but that was a localized phenomenon. It didn't travel very far … it didn't go beyond Al Qaim." From Chief Warrant Officer -4 Timothy S. McWilliams and Lieutenant Colonel Kurtis P. Wheeler, *Al Anbar Awakening, Volume 1, American Perspectives, U.S. Marines Counterinsurgency in Iraq, 2004-2009*, published by the Marine Corps University, 2009, p. 274, 279. Hereafter, this publication will be referred to as *The Anbar Anthology, Volume I*, 2009.

4. What happened in Ramadi was spectacular. This narrative does not marginalize Ramadi events; to the contrary, preceding events set the conditions for Ramadi to be the worst city in Iraq by the spring of 2006.

5. There are many characterizations of the Awakening, just ask Coalition members or Iraqis that participated, as the IDA team did during the collection phase of the Awakening project. This paper generally refers to the Awakening movement (as characterized here) that took place in Al Anbar from 2004 to 2008 and not the political party or its evolution to Concerned Local Citizens or the Sons of Iraq.

6. Brigadier General Sean MacFarland interview with Dr. William Knarr, Ft Leavenworth, Kansas, 13 October 2010.

7. Andrew Lubin, "Ramadi, from Caliphate to Capitalism," in the U.S, Naval Institute's *Proceedings* Magazine, Apr 2008 Volume 134/4/1,262.

8. Lieutenant Colonel Tony Deane interview with Dr. William Knarr, Institute for Defense Analyses, at Fort Leavenworth, KS, on 12 October 2010. This was early September 2006, prior to the 9 September meeting with Colonel MacFarland and the public proclamation on 14 September 2006.

9. *The Anbar Anthology, Volume I*, 2009, p. 1.

10. Najim Abed al-Jabouri and Sterling Jensen, "The Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening," Prism Volume 2, Number 1, accessed at http://cco.dodlive.mil/prism-volume-2-issue-1/ on 17 July 2015. Mr. Sterling Jensen was a contract interpreter from May 2006 until June 2007 working in Ramadi with the command group of the RFCT and then, after transfer of authority, with the 1st BCT, 3rd Infantry Division. Najim abed al-jabouri was a major general in the new Iraqi police and mayor of Tal Afar, Ninevah, from 2005 to 2008.

11. Mr. Mahmood al-Janabi, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, in Amman, Jordan, 7 February 2011.

12. The proclamation referred to is *Al Anbar Rescue Movement Proclamation*, 14 September 2006, copy on file provided by Colonel Tony Deane.

13. Lieutenant General John Allen interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Major General Tom Jones, USMC retired, 16 March 2010.

14. Sheikh Majed Abd al-Razzaq Ali al-Sulayman, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, in Amman, Jordan, 3 February 2011.

15. Colonel Tony Deane interview with Dr. William Knarr, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 12 October 2010.

16. Robert H. Dorff, Chapter 2, "A Primer in Strategy Development," of Joseph R. Cerami and James F. Holcomb, Jr., editors, U.S. Army War College Guide to Strategy, February 2001, p. 11.

17. Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations, 11 August 2011, p. ix.

18. Sheikh Majed Abd al-Razzaq Ali al-Sulayman, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, Amman, Jordan, 3 February 2011.

19. Sterling Jensen and Najim al-Jabouri, "The Iraqi and AQI Roles in the Sunni Awakening," *Prism*, vol. II, December 2010.

20. General Babikir Baderkhan Zibari, Chief of Staff and Commanding General of the Iraqi Joint Forces, interview with Dr. William Knarr and Major Robert Castro, USMC, Iraq Ministry of Defense, Baghdad, 3 February 2011.

21. Mr. Mahmood al-Janabi, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, Amman, Jordan, 7 February 2011.

22. Sheikh Majed interview 3 February 2011.

23. Engineer Jalal al-Gaoud, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, Ms. Mary Hawkins, and Mr. Munther Saiegh, Amman, Jordan, 5 February 2011.

24. Mullah Nathem al-Jabouri, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, Amman, Jordan, 12 and 14 February 2011.

25. Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari, interview with Dr. William Knarr and Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, Baghdad, 30 April 2010.

26. Mullah Nathem interview 12 and 14 February 2011.

27. Mr. Saif Rachman, interview with Dr. William Knarr and Major Robert Castro, USMC, Baghdad, 5 February 2006. At the time of the interview, Mr. Saif was the chief of staff for Dr. Hachem al-Hassani, speaker of the Iraq Parliament and a member of the Iraqi Islamic Party. He started working for Dr. Hassani in early 2004 and assisted in the negotiations with the Fallujans.

28. Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe* (Random House, 2008), p. 28.

29. Dr. Mowaffak al-Rubai'e, Iraqi National Security Advisor interview with Dr. William Knarr and Major Robert Castro, USMC, at his home in Baghdad, Iraq, 29 January 2006.

30. Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, interview with Dr. William Knarr and Major Robert Castro, USMC, Baghdad, 6 February 2006; Dr. Mowaffak al-Rubai'e, interview 29 January 2006.

31. Multi-National Force Iraq-Embassy Joint Mission Statement, signed on 16 August 2004 [hereafter called the *Joint Mission Statement*, 2004] by General George W. Casey, Commander, MNF-I and Ambassador John D. Negroponte, Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, Iraq, declassified on 29 September 2009.

32. Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period (also known as the Transitional Administrative Law, 8 March 2004, accessed at http://www.constitution.org/cons/iraq/TAL.html on 20 September 2014. The TAL provided for an election of the National Assembly no later than 31 January 2005 (the National Assembly would elect the President and two Deputy Presidents; they would form the President's Council; "The Presidency Council shall name a Prime Minister unanimously"); United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1546, 8 June 2004.

33. John D. Banusiewicz, "' As Iraqis Stand Up, We Will Stand Down,' Bush Tells Nation," American Forces Press Service, 28 June 2005, accessed at http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=16277 on 26 September 2014.

34. *Joint Mission Statement*, 2004, p. 4.

35. Multi-National Force–Iraq Campaign Plan: Operation Iraqi Freedom, Partnership: From Occupation to Constitutional Elections, signed by, George W. Casey, Commander, USA, 5 Aug 2004, declassified on 29 September 2009, p 18.

36. *Joint Mission Statement*, 2004, p. 2. In many cases when this paper refers to AQI it is also referring to foreign fighters and other extremists, typically called irreconcilables, whether they are Iraqi or foreign.

37. Campaign Plan, 2004, p. 15.

38. Campaign Plan, 2004, p. 17.

39. Joe Klein, "Saddam's Revenge." *Time*, 8 September 2005. This was the response from an anonymous intelligence officer when asked about working with the tribes, p. 50.

40. William Doyle, "A Soldier's Dream: Captain Travis Patriquin and the Awakening of Iraq," (NAL Caliber, June 2011), p. 84.

41. Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe* (Random House, 2008); also Mr. Keith Mines discussion via telephone with Dr. William Knarr, 13 March 2011. Mines went on to say that this wasn't so much an awakening as it was a simple business deal; also Sheikh Bezi Majil Nijris al-Gaoud interview with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, 3 February 2011.

42. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Memorandum for Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, Subject: Sunni Outreach, dated 12 April 2004, declassified 7 July 2009.

43. CPA worked for Secretary of Defense but was dissolved on 28 June 2004. The U.S. Embassy was then stood up in July 2004.

44. Colonel Richard "Rick" Welch, USA, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, at Camp Victory, Iraq, on 25 April 2010. Colonel Welch was the chief, Reconciliation/ Engagement Cell for the United States Division-Center (USD-C). Colonel Welch served in a similar capacity at the division level since he first deployed in 2004 to support the 1st Cavalry Division in the Baghdad area. That period was interrupted by a few short breaks and a year at the War College.

45. David Rose, "Heads in the Sand," *Vanity Fair* web exclusive, 12 May 2012, accessed at: www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2009/05/iraqi-insurgents200905; also, Colonel Michael Walker, USMC, interview via telephone with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, 6 January 2011.

46. Colonel Michael Walker, USMC, interview via telephone with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, 6 January 2011.

47. Master Sergeant Martin Moore interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, at the Special Operations Task Force (SOTF) headquarters, Camp Victory, Iraq, 21 April 2010; and Bezi interview 3 February 2010.

48. Colonel Michael Walker, USMC, interview via telephone with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, 6 January 2011; also Rose, "Heads in the Sand."

49. Prime Minister Ayad Allawi interview with Dr. William Knarr and Major Robert Castro, USMC, Baghdad, 6 February 2006.

50. Ian Fisher and Somini Sengupta, "The Conflict in Iraq: Reconciliation; Iraq to Offer Amnesty, but No Killers Need Apply." *New York Times*, 4 August 2004, accessed at http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/04/world/conflict-iraq-reconciliation-iraq-offer-amnesty-but-no-killers-need-apply.html?pagewanted=print on 26 Sep 2014.

51. There were two major operations in Fallujah in 2004: Operation VIGILANT RESOLVE in April and Operation AL FAJR in November—sometimes respectively called the battles for Fallujah I and II.

52. MNF-I Campaign Progress Review for the period of December 2004 to June 2005, dated 27 June 2005, declassified on 29 September 2009, p. 7, 11, 12. Voter turnout in Al Anbar was estimated at 1 percent. Edward Wong, "Turnout in the Iraqi Election Is Reported at 70 Percent." *New York Times*, 22 December 2005, accessed at: http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/22/international/middleeast/22iraq.html?_r=0, on 30 Apr 2015.

53. Captain Scott Cuomo, USMC, "The 'Wild, Wild West:' Iraqi lessons for Afghanistan," *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 2009. Despite what was seen by the Coalition as a success in Fallujah, the insurgents' immediate follow-on attack in Mosul was disconcerting. According to General Casey, "I almost thought we were going to lose Mosul." General Casey interview with Dr. William Knarr and Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, at the Pentagon, on 16 December 2010.

54. USSOCOM History and Research Office, USSOCOM 20 Year History: 1987 to 2007, p. 113-137, The CJSOTF would later move to Balad. This does not include special operations numbered task force operations.

55. Ibid., p. 113-137.

56. Master Sergeant Steve Bleigh, USA retired, discussion with Dr. William Knarr, Fort Campbell, Kentucky, on 20 August 2014.

57. Ibid.

58. Shiekh Sabah interview with Dr. William Knarr, LtCol David Graves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, in Amman, Jordan, on 3 February 2011.

59. Bleigh interview, 20 August 2014.

60. Master Sergeant Andy Marchal, discussion via telephone with Dr. William Knarr, 21 December 2012.

61. Brent Lindeman, "Better Lucky than Good: A Theory of Unconventional Minds and the Power of 'Who'," Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009.

62. Master Sergeant Marchal discussions, 21 December 2012.

63. Master Sergeant Marchal, USA retired, interview with Dr. William Knarr at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, on 19 August 2014.

64. Some have characterized the Al Gaouds as a subtribe of the Albu-Nimr. Some have characterized the Albu-Nimr as a confederation. This monograph defers to the operator, Master Sergeant Marchal. Given his experience and expertise in working with the Al Gaouds and Albu-Nimr he characterizes the former as a clan and the latter as a tribe.

65. Colonel Walker interview, 6 January 2011.

66. Master Sergeant Marchal discussions, 21 December 2012.

67. Master Sergeant Marchal interview, 19 August 2014.

68. *The Anbar Anthology, Volume I*, 2009, p. 24-25.

69. Master Sergeant Marchal discussions, 21 December 2012.

70. Thomas R. Searle, "Tribal Engagement in Anbar Province: The Critical Role of Special Operations Forces" *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 50 (Third quarter, 2008): p. 62–66.

71. Colonel Walker interview, 6 January 2011; also Rose, "Heads in the Sand."

72. Colonel Davis interview, 25 May 2010.

73. Captain Cuomo, "The 'Wild, Wild West."

74. Colonel Davis interview, 25 May 2010.

75. Ibid.

76. Colonel Stephen Davis presentation, *Regimental Combat Team Two, Operation STEEL CURTAIN*, November 2005, presented on 25 May 2010.

77. Colonel Davis interview, 25 May 2010.

78. Major Frank Diorio, USMC, interview with Major General Tom Jones, USMC retired, Camp Pendleton, California, 8 February 2011.

79. Ibid.

80. Colonel Ahmad Jelayan Khalaf, commander, Desert Protectors, interview with Dr. William Knarr and Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, in the Mayor's office in Husaybah on 18 April 2010.

81. Colonel Ahmad interview, 18 April 2010

82. Ibid.. Also found in *The Anbar Anthology, Volume II*, 2009, p. 141.

83. Colonel Dale Alford, briefing on 3rd Battalion,6th Marines in Al Qaim Iraq, August 2005–March 2006, Institute for Defense Analyses, 16 February 2010.

84. Sheikh Kurdi interview, 17 April 2010.

85. "And that's a fact!" exclaimed Sheikh Kurdi, the on-the-ground leader of the Albu-Mahal tribe, after Sheikh Sabah, the Paramount Sheikh of the Albu-Mahal tribe, fled to Jordan. Sheik Kurdi interview, 17 April 2010.

86. *Forced* was a descriptor used by many Americans to describe marriages of foreign fighters to local women. However, most Iraqis interviewed by the JAWP team in Al Qaim area did not agree with the word "forced." Sheikh Kurdi explained that since the foreign fighters were there on a *jihad*, that they could not simply take a woman because religiously that would be improper, so they "arranged" these marriages. However, these marriages were not always without some sort of intimidation. Unfortunately, once the foreign fighter died or left Iraq, there was no one to take care of the widow and children.

87. Camp Gannon was named for Major Richard Gannon, commanding officer, Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines. Major Gannon was awarded the Silver Star for his actions on 17 April 2004 while attempting to save members of his company. He was killed in action.

88. Sheikh Kurdi Rafee Farhan al-Mahalawi, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, at Kurdi's guest house, Ubaidi, Iraq, 17 April 2010.

89. Hanah Allam and Mohammed al-Dulaimy, "Iraqis Lament Call for Help," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 17 May 2005, indicated that other Al Qaim tribes, in addition to Albu-Mahal, were also resisting AQI, but our research found no support for that contention.

90. Iraq Tribal Study: Al Anbar Governorate, 18 June 2006, Global Resources Group, 4-17 and 4-28

91. Allam and al-Dulaimy, "Iraqis Lament Call for Help."

92. A Mahalawi is a tribal member of the Albu-Mahal tribe.

93. MNF-I Press Release, "Victories in May," 9 June 2005,accessed at: www.usf-iraq.com/news/press-releases/victoriesduring-may.

94. Allam and al-Dulaimy, "Iraqis Lament Call for Help."

95. Ibid.

96. Colonel Ahmad interview, 18 April 2010. Rawah is 60 kilometers east of Ubaydi.

97. Sheikh Kurdi interview, 17 April 2010.

98. Colonel Ahmad interview, 18 April 2010.

99. Dr. Sadun Dulaymi, former minister of defense, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, in his home, Baghdad, 24 April 2010.

100. Major Diorio interview, 8 February 2011.

101. Ellen Knickmeyer and Jonathan Finer, "Insurgents Assert Control Over Town Near Syrian Border," *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 6 September 2005.

102. MNF-I Campaign Progress Review for the period of December 2004 to June 2005, dated 27 June 2005, declassified on 29 September 2009, p. 7, 11, 12; Voter turnout in Al Anbar was estimated at 1 percent. Edward Wong, "Turnout in the Iraqi Election Is Reported at 70 Percent," *New York Times*, 22 December 2005, accessed at: http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/22/international/middleeast/22iraq.html?_r=0, on 30 Apr 2015.

103. General Casey interview,16 December 2010. Per General Casey, "[When] John Negroponte was there, there really wasn't any kind of Sunni engagement efforts broadly at the national level … also Lieutenant General Daniel Bolger, USA, Retired, deputy MNC-I commander from February 2005 to June 2005, then CMATT (Coalition Military Assistance Training Team) commander from June 2005 to June 2006, interview with Dr. William Knarr, at General Bolger's office at North Carolina State University on 17 September 2014.

104. Lieutenant General Rick Lynch interview with Dr. William Knarr and Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, at the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., 25 March 2010.

105. James Cogan, "Who is Iraq's new prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari?" World Socialist Website, 18 Apr 2005, accessed 6 October 2014 at: http://www.wsws.

org/en/articles/2005/04/jaaf-a18.html. http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2005/04/jaaf-a18.html on 6 Oct 2014. Al Jaafari was installed as the prime minister of the Iraqi Transition Government (ITG) on 7 April 2005, and his cabinet, including Sadun, were sworn in on 3 May 2005; BBC News, "New Iraqi government members, The first democratically elected Iraqi government in 50 years was sworn in on 3 May," accessed 6 October 2014 at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4493999.stm.

106. Additionally, Lieutenant General David Petraeus changed command of MNSTC-I with Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey on or about 10 September 2005. General Bolger interview, 17 September 2014.

107. Many countries find militias threatening, so it's interesting the second amendment to the United States Constitution provides for "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." The key words are "well-regulated".

108. Dr. Dulaymi interview, 24 April 2010.

109. Dr. Dulaymi interview, 24 April 2010; Bobby Gosh, "Al-Qaeda Loses an Iraqi Friend," *Time*, 14 May 2007, accessed 9 October 2014 at: http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1620607,00.html.

110. This comment by Dr. Dulaymi that the Desert Protectors was different in name than the MOI or MOD is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

111. Colonel Kevin McDonnell, USA retired, telephone discussion with Dr. William Knarr, 8 August 2014.

112. Colonel Davis interview, 25 May 2010.

113. Dr. Dulaymi interview, 24 April 2010; "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Multi-National Force-Iraq and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense Concerning Training and Equipping the 'Desert Protectors,'" signed by General Casey and Dr. Dulaymi on 15 September 2005. Hereafter referred to as the Desert Protectors 15 Sep 05 MOU

114. Desert Protectors 15 Sep 05 MOU

115. Colonel Davis interview, 25 May 2010.

116. General Casey interview, 16 December 2010. Additionally, on 13 July 2005, MNF-I issued a Fragmentary Order on Operations Sayaid (Hunter) aimed at denying AQI safe haven in the Western Euphrates River Valley (also from Casey interview notes).

117. Colonel Davis credits the increase in force structure to General Casey's understanding of the situation and intent to exploit success in the WERV.

118. Lindeman, "Better Lucky Than Good."

119. Lieutenant Colonel Martin Adams, interview with Dr. William Knarr and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, Institute for Defense Analyses, Alexandria, VA, 21 December 2010.

120. Ibid.

121. Colonel Davis interview 25 May 2010.

122. 5th Group, 3rd Battalion, B Company, now 5322.

123. Captain Joe Connolly, Commander, ODA 582, interview with Dr. William Knarr and Ms. Mary Hawkins, IDA, 26 November 2010.

124. This chart doesn't reflect all the forces, but, modified for discussion, it does show relationships among the major players in the development of the Desert Protectors, as well as the commitment of the CJSOTF during this period. The CJSOTF had a country-wide mission. As an example, the CJSOTF also committed ODAs as Battalion Augmentation Training Teams (BATT) to train Iraqi forces in the north. As such, the Desert Protectors program was a small part of their overall mission. The date listed, 15 September 2005, is significant because the MOU for the Desert Protectors program was signed on that date.

125. Lieutenant Colonel Adams interview, 21 December 2010.

126. Colonel Alford briefing, 16 February 2010.

127. This was a highly contentious topic with the Desert Protectors. Periodic rumors of a unit out of area deployment would be immediately challenged by the Desert Protectors. They made it very clear that that is not what they signed up for. Major Joseph Connolly, USA, telephone discussion with Dr. William Knarr, 17 June 2015.

128. MNF-I Strategic Planning Directive, "Making the Elections Decisive," dated 30 Oct 2005, p. 3.

129. Electoral Geography 2.0, Subject: Republic of Iraq Constitutional Referendum of 14 October 2005. Accessed 14 January 2014 at: http://www.electoralgeography. com/new/en/countries/i/iraq/iraq-referendum-2005.html.

130. Colonel Alford presentation to IDA, 16 February 2010.

131. Those forces swung south through the desert to remain undetected as they moved to the border area and then moved north to reposition for the asssult.

132. Colonel Davis interview, 25 May 2010.

133. Ibid.

134. Captain Connolly interview, 26 November 2010.

135. The 3rd Brigade would be reflagged as the 28th Brigade, 7th IAD.

136. *MNF-I Strategic Planning Directive (November 2005 to April 2006) – Making the Elections Decisive*, 30 October 2005, declassified on 28 September 2009.

137. The training and deployment of those platoons were called "cohorts" with Cohort I and II consisting of Platoons 1-3 to Al Qaim, Cohort III consisting of platoons 4-6 from the Albu-Nimr tribe serving in the 2nd Brigade of the 7th IAD in the Corridor (specifically with IA battalions in Hit, Hadithah and Rawah), and Cohort IV consisting of platoons 7-9 to be recruited from several tribes in the Ramadi area and serving with the 1st Brigade of the 7th IAD. MNF-I, *Desert Protectors Executive Summary*, 9 November 2005.

138. ODA 545 had been deactivated in 1999 when the companies were reduced to five detachments. Although they deployed to Iraq in May they didn't deploy into the Hit area until Aug 2005.

139. Joint Mission Statement between General George W. Casey, Commander, MNF-I and Ambassador John D. Negroponte, Chief of Mission, *A Plan for the Year Ahead: Transition to Self-Reliance*, updated on 7 February 2005, declassified on 28 September 2009; MNF-I Campaign Progress Review, December 2004-June 2005, dated 27 June 2005, declassified on 28 September 2009.

140. Edward Wong, "Turnout in the Iraqi Election Is Reported at 70 Percent," *New York Times*, 22 December 2005, accessed 30 April 2015 at: http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/22/international/middleeast/22iraq.html?_r=0.,

141. Gerald E. Cummins, Colonel, USA, MNC-I white paper, "Desert Protectors," 9 December 2005; and telephone interview with Colonel Cummins, 7 September 2014. Although the memorandum was dated in December, the program was established in September 2005 with the "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Multi-National Force-Iraq and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense Concerning Training and Equipping the 'Desert Protectors,'" signed by General Casey and Dr. Dulaymi on 15 Sep 2005

142. Master Sergeant Marchal interview with Dr. William Knarr on 19 August 2014 at Fort Campbell, Kentucky; and Major Brent Lindeman, USA, "Inside Anbar," *Combating Terrorism Exchange (CTX) Journal*, Volume 3, No. 2, May 2013, p. 31.

143. Master Sergeant Marchal interview, 19 August 2014.

144. Bobby Gosh, "Al-Qaeda Loses an Iraqi Friend," Time, 14 May 2007; and Dr. Hareth al-Dhari interview with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, on 8 February 2011 at his office in Amman, Jordan.

145. Dr. al-Dhari interview on 8 February 2011; and Associated Press, *Arrest of Sunni Leader Sought in Iraq*, 16 November 2006, accessed 21 April 2011 at: www.ctv.ca/CTVNews/World/20061116/sunni_leader_061116/. Sheikh Hareth al-Dhari remained in Iraq until he fled in 2006 when the Iraqi Minister of Interior, Jawad al-Bolani, issued a warrant for his arrest for inciting terrorism and violence among the Iraqi people.

146. *1920s Revolution Brigades*, accessed 17 December 2013 at: http://www.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgibin/groups/view/9#note10. See also; Bill Roggio, "The Sunni Civil War," *The Long War Journal*, 27 March 2007. Accessed 17 December 2013 accessed at: http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/03/the_sunni_civil_war.php.

147. Lieutenant Colonel Lindeman interview with Dr. William Knarr at Fort Campbell, Kentucky on 19 August 2014.

148. The new Counterinsurgency Field Manual, FM 3-24, wouldn't be published until December 2006.

149. Master Sergeant Marchal interview, 19 August 2014.

150. The seven BOS include: intelligence, maneuver, fire support, air defense, mobility and survivability, combat service support, and command and control. As some simple examples of the assessment, the insurgent's command and control system relied on travelling imams and local mosques; their intelligence apparatus was primarily human collection; their maneuver system was based on their ability to blend into the population; and their fire support/psyops consisted of car bombs and IEDs/Imams and media. These are now, doctrinally, referred to as Warfighting Functions. There are the traditional six and the newest one approved in 2014: Engagement. ADP 3-0—the six traditional Warfighting functions: mission command, movement and maneuver, intelligence, fires, sustainment, protection, and the seventh, engagement—from PAM TP 525-8-5.

151. LtCol David Graves, USMC, "Unit Presence in Al Anbar," May 2001.

152. Colonel Norman Cooling, USMC, former commander of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines (3/3) in the Hadithah area of Iraq from March to September 2006, interview with Major General Thomas Jones, USMC retired, Mountain Warfare Training Center, 7 May 2010.

153. Andrew Tilghman, "U.S. call for Iraqi police in Haditha goes unanswered," *Stars and Stripes*, 5 June 2006. Although the 19 November 2005 Coalition killing of at least 24 Iraqi civilians in Hadithah, known as the Hadithah massacre, wouldn't occur until after recruits were in training, this was indicative of conditions in the Corridor at the time and didn't engender a warm relationship between the Coalition and the Iraqi civilians. CNN Library, Hadithah Killings Fast Facts, updated 14 March 2015, accessed at http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/30/world/meast/haditha-killings-fast-facts/ on 25 April 2015.

154. Chief Warrant Officer-3 Tony Goble, USA, former member of Special Forces ODA, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, at SOTF headquarters at Camp Victory, Iraq, 1 March 2010.

155. Master Sergeant Marchal interview, 19 August 2014. Shiekh Razzak had been killed by Coalition forces.

156. Ibid. Interesting to note that delaying the transport of the candidates had happened elsewhere, hence the lesson, per Colonel Tony Deane, "only force them to be brave once!" The Coalition needs to move the recruits the same day they are assembled. Once the insurgents recognize that these men have volunteered to fight the insurgency, the intimidation on them and their families is tremendous. This is an operational level issue. Colonel Tony Deane interview with Dr. William Knarr, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 12 October 2010.

157. Brigadier General David Reist, Deputy Commander MNF-W, Feb 2006–Feb 2007, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, Ms. Mary Hawkins, and Colonel Tracy King USMC, 4 October 2010. General Reist credits the chief of police in Baghdadi—Colonel Shaban Barzan Abdul Himrin

al-Ubaydi, also known as the Lion of Baghdadi—with leading the fight against AQI in that area.

158. Electoral Geography 2.0, Iraq Legislative Election 2005 (December). Accessed 8 May 2015 at: http://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/i/iraq/iraq-legislative-election-2005.html on 8 May 2015. According to the Electoral Geography 585,249 votes were cast of 677,821 registered voters for 86.4 percent of the vote.

159. Colonel John L. Gronski, *2/28 BCT Goes to War*, accessed 8 May 2015 at: http://www.milvet.state.pa.us/PAO/pr/2006_07_01.htm.

160. Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: Politics, Elections and Benchmarks*, Congressional Research Service, RS21968, 1 July 2010, p. 1, 10.

161. Major General John Gronski, telephone discussion with Dr. William Knarr, 8 May 2015.

162. Monte Morin, "Suicide bomb kills dozens of Iraqi police recruits, two Americans," *Stars and Stripes*, 6 January 2006. Accessed 8 May 2015 at: http://www.stripes.com/news/suicide-bomb-kills-dozens-of-iraqi-police-recruits-two-americans-1.43269.

163. This is not to suggest that the Coalition partner with the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade but it does suggest that the Coalition find those seemingly legitimate intermediaries such as Sheikh Nasser to work with groups such as the 1920 Revolutionary Brigade. One of the conditions, however, was that those tribal leaders and intermediaries needed protection.

164. Monte Morin, "Officer Killed by Suicide Bomb had High Hopes for Ramadi," Stars and Stripes, 9 January 2006, accessed at: http://www.stripes.com/news/officer-killed-by-suicide-bomb-had-high-hopes-for-ramadi-1.43384.

165. Morin, "Suicide bomb kills dozens".

166. *The Anbar Anthology*, Volume I, 2009, p. 127-130. Major Connable saw the conditions in late 2005 as ideal, i.e., as an opportunity to be reinforced and exploited; however that opportunity was either missed or misinterpreted by the MNC-I and MNF-I. He also mentions the MNF-I intent to hold the next two deploying brigades as a reserve.

167. This was not just a "Ramadi" issue. This was an operational issue that required MNF-W, MNC-I and MNF-I to redistribute forces to preempt the threat. One possibility was to employ elements of the Call Forward force in Kuwait. As an example, Task Force 1-35 Armor had been in Kuwait since 15 November 2005 awaiting a mission. They were finally deployed into Iraq in May 2006 as part of the RFCT. Colonel Anthony Deane interview with Dr. William Knarr, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, 12 October 2010.

168. MNF-I planned to reduce force structure in Iraq in 2006 by two combat brigades by not deploying elements of the 1st Brigade, 1st Infantry Division from Fort Riley, Kansas, and maintaining the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Armored Division in Kuwait as the Call Forward Brigade. DOD News Release, "Iraq Force Adjustments Announced," No 1320-05, 23 December 2005. According to the release,

"This decision follows the demonstrated capabilities of Iraqi Security Forces in establishing primary security conditions in the recent Iraqi elections. Continued success in the handover of security responsibilities is making this U.S. force adjustment possible." As part of the reduction, there was discussion that the 2nd BCT, of the 28th Infantry Division would not be back-filled when they departed in June 2006. General Gronski telephone discussion, 8 May 2015. In addition to public opinion support for bringing the troops home, this proclivity to reduce U.S. presence in Iraq can be partially explained by what is known as the "Antibody Theory" embraced by General John Abizaid, commander CENT-COM, and supported by General Casey. The theory was based on the belief that U.S. troops were an antibody in Iraqi society, that is, they were an irritant, and the less visible they were, the better. Max Boot, "The Worst," *New Republic*, 17 March 2011, accessed 25 May 2011 at: http://www.newrepublic.com/book/review/known-unknown-donald-rumsfeld. Also see: Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

169. Colonel Sean MacFarland and Major Niel Smith, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," *Military Review*, March-April 2008.

170. It's also important to note that this was not the result of any initial collaboration with the Marines in Al Qaim. Although, when Lieutenant Colonel Bill Jurney arrived in the heart of Ramadi in November 2006 with 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, he had collaborated with Lieutenant Colonel Dale Alford, former commander 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines who was in Al Qaim, and brought those concepts with him.

171. Lechner e-mail, "Anbar," 16 January 2014.

172. General MacFarland interview, 13 October 2010.

173. General Casey interview, 16 December 2010.

174. As a Sunni soldier in a Shia dominated Army they could be deployed anywhere in Iraq, to include Shia communities. That could be deadly. Additionally, they first wanted to protect their families and their communities, not someone else's community.

175. What happened in Ramadi was spectacular. This narrative does not marginalize Ramadi events; to the contrary, preceding events set the conditions for Ramadi to be the worst city in Iraq by the spring of 2006.

176. *The Anbar Anthology, Volume II*, 2009, p. 13.

177. *The Anbar Anthology, Volume I*, 2009, p. 274.

178. *Al Anbar Rescue Movement Proclamation*, 14 September 2006, copy on file provided by Colonel Tony Deane. Also Colonel Deane interview, 12 October 2010.

179. Dr. Dulaymi interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, at his home in Baghdad, 24 April 2010. The author was enlightened to this relationship among the tribes and leadership when trying to locate Dr. Dulaymi. During an interview with Shiekh Kurdi Albu-Mahal in

Al Qaim, the author mentioned the difficulty in locating Dr. Dulaymi and that U.S. Forces Iraq did not know who he was. Sheikh Kurdi immediately opened his speed dial and provided the contact information for Dr. Dulaymi. The "Sheikh net" was alive and well! Also, Shiekh Kurdi Rafee Farhan al-Mahalawi interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, Kurdi's guest house, Ubaidi, Iraq, 17 April 2010.

180. It's not the intent of this paper to leave the impression that tribes were monolithic and the Sheikh had control over tribal members—that's not the case, intra-tribal conflict was common. As an example, there were some Mahalawis that were affiliated with the AQI, even in 2006. But in this case, most of the Albu-Mahal tribesmen to the east of Ramadi in the Albu-Souda area were anti-AQI by late 2006.

181. Sabah interview, 3 February 2011.

182. *Al Anbar Rescue Movement Proclamation*, file provided by Colonel Deane. Also Deane interview, 12 October 2010.

183. Staff Brigadier General Ismael Sha Hamid Dulaymi interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, 7th IAD Headquarters, Al Asad, Iraq, 15 April 2010.

184. Colonel Michael Walker, USMC, interview via telephone with Dr. William Knarr, Lieutenant Colonel DavidGraves, USMC, and Ms. Mary Hawkins, 6 January 2011. This is despite the fact that many Marines returned to the same region because it took a while for those repeat tours with seven or eight months to one year breaks in-between to matter.

185. Thomas E. Ricks, "Situation Called Dire in West Iraq," *The Washington Post*, 11 September 2006. Officially, the report is known as the "State of the Emergency in Al Anbar," I MEF G-2, 17 August 2006 (no author named). It was cleared for open publication 16 December 2010 by the Office of Security Review, Department of Defense, and declassified by U.S. Central Command Memorandum 10-012, at the request of Dr. William Knarr.

186. "State of the Emergency in Al Anbar," 1.

187. "State of the Emergency in Al Anbar," 4.

188. Al Qaim was pretty stable by this time with a police force and functioning government, Dr. William Knarr, "An Awakening in Al Qaim," *Combating Terrorism Exchange (CTX)*, May 2013; Colonel Nick Marano, commander, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, interview with Major General Thomas Jones, USMC retired, Camp Pendleton, 9 February 2011 . As indicated, the Corridor was improving, in particular the Baghdadi area near Al Asad, with Hit and Hadithah following. Also, General Reist interview, 4 October 2010; and MNF-I Campaign Progress Review, 20 December 2005, declassified 28 September 2009, p. 19.

189. Governor Mamoun Sami Rashid, Al Anbar Governor 2005 to 2006, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, in Ramadi, 7 April 2010.

190. This is documented in much more detail in William Knarr, Dale Alford, Mary Hawkins, et. al., *Al Sahawa—The Awakening Volume I: Al Anbar Province Final Report*, Institute for Defense Analyses, Jan 2014. This also discusses the psychological aspects. As an example, events in Al Qaim set the precedence psychologically signaling to others in Al Anbar, "We can do this, we can defeat AQI."

191. All three are districts; in addition, Hit and Ramadi are cities.

192. USSOCOM History and Research Office, USSOCOM 20 Year History: 1987 to 2007, pp. 113-137

193. Per DOD dictionary, Economy of force is: The judicious employment and distribution of forces so as to expend the minimum essential combat power on secondary efforts in order to allocate the maximum possible combat power on primary efforts. Source: JP 3-0 Joint Publication, accessed on 3 May 2015 at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/index.html; also Colonel Davis interview 25 May 2010.

194. Colonel Davis credits the increase in force structure to General Casey's understanding of the situation and intent to exploit success in the WERV.

195. Field Manual 3-24 and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, with Change 1, 2 June 2014, p. 2-3. This edition was chosen because it addresses operations in Al Qaim.

196. Field Manual 3-24and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5, *Counterinsurgency*, 15 December 2006 p. 6-19. This edition was chosen because it was applicable to the time frame.

197. Colonel Cummins telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr, 7 September 2014. Colonel Cummins was the Desert Protectors Project Officer at the MNC-I.

198. General Ray Odierno, Regionally Aligned Forces: A New Model for Building Partnerships, 22 March 2012, accessed 10 May 2015 at: http://armylive.dodlive.mil/index.php/2012/03/aligned-forces/.

199. Lieutenant General Charles E. Cleveland and Lieutenant Colonel Stuart L. Farris, "Special Operations – An Army Core Competency," *Army Magazine*, June 2014, p. 25. Although the Marines Corps is more adept at working with local populations than the Army, this still becomes an important lesson under these conditions because, according to Colonel Davis, they had been prohibited from working by, with, and through the tribes to this point.

200. Dr. Dulaymi interview 24 Apr 2010. Dr. Dulaymi understood that such a small force had to come under some institutional mechanism for administration and logistics. As such, the 15 Sep 05 MOU list of MOD responsibilities, signed by Dr. Dulaymi, indicates the Desert Protectors would: be recruited and vetted into the Iraqi Armed Forces; affirm their willingness to serve where ordered in the defense of Iraq; be integrated and vetted into the Iraqi Army.

201. Colonel Cummins telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr, 19 June 2015. Colonel Cummins was the Desert Protectors Project Officer at the MNC-I.

202. Abd al-hakim Muhammad Rashid, Hadithah Mayor, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, in his office in Hadithah, 14 April 2010.

203. Colonel Bill Jurney, commander of TF 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Joint Forces Command, Norfolk, Virginia, 3 March 2010.

204. Dr. Dulaymi interview 24 April 2010; See also: "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Multi-National Force-Iraq and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense Concerning Training and Equipping the 'Desert Protectors,'" signed by General Casey and Dr. Dulaymi on 15 September 2005.

205. *Joint Mission Statement,* 2004.

206. *The Anbar Anthology, Volume I*, 2009, p. 274; *The Anbar Anthology, Volume II*, 2009, p. 13.

207. Colonel McDonnell telephone discussion with Dr. William Knarr, 8 August 2014. This redeployment to Al Anbar was also part of the MNF-I larger campaign plan to seal off border areas and routes along the WERV into Baghdad. Also, General Casey interview, 16 December 2010. Additionally, on 13 July 2005, MNF-I issued a Fragmentary Order on Operations Sayaid (Hunter) aimed at denying AQI safe haven in the WERV (also from Casey interview notes).

208. General Casey interview with Dr. William Knarr and Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, at the Pentagon, on 16 December 2010. Also; General Bolger interview with Dr. William Knarr, at Bolger's office at North Carolina State University, 17 September 2014. Additionally, Lieutenant General Rick Lynch interview with Dr. William Knarr and Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, Pentagon, Washington, DC, 25 March 2010. Although, according to Lynch, the initial engagements with the Sunni leaders connected to the insurgents did not bear fruit, the initiative reflected an attitude change.

209. General Casey interview, 16 December 2010. See also; MNF-I Strategic Planning Directive, "Making the Elections Decisive," dated 30 October 2005, declassified on 29 September 2009, p. 2.

210. Dr. Dulaymi interview with Dr. William Knarr and Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, at Dr. Dulaymi's home in Baghdad, 24 April 2010.

211. Dr. Dulaymi interview, 24 April 2010; Bobby Gosh, "Al-Qaeda Loses an Iraqi Friend," Time, 14 May 2007, accessed 9 October 2014 at: http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1620607,00.html.

212. "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Multi-National Force-Iraq and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense Concerning Training and Equipping the 'Desert Protectors,'" signed by General Casey and Dr. Dulaymi on 15 Sep 2005. This 3 x 3 matrix with strategy (ends, ways, and means) along the horizontal axis and levels of war (strategic, operational, and tactical) along the vertical axis resembles a Tic-Tac-Toe win from strategic "ends" to tactical "means" via operational "ways" [the MOU – the alliance with the tribe(s)].

213. If given the choice between being a soldier or a policeman, the tribesmen would select the police for self-preservation as well as community protection. As a Sunni soldier in a Shia dominated Army they could be deployed anywhere in Iraq, to include Shia communities. That could be deadly. Additionally, they first wanted to protect their families and their communities, not someone else's community.

214. Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period (also known as the Transitional Administrative Law, 8 March 2004, accessed 20 September 2014 at: http://www.constitution.org/cons/iraq/TAL.html. The TAL provided for an election of the National Assembly no later than 31 January 2005 (the National Assembly would elect the President and two Deputy Presidents; they would form the President's Council; "The Presidency Council shall name a Prime Minister unanimously"); United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1546, 8 June 2004.

215. BBC News, *Iraqi Election Voter Turnout*, accessed 14 May 2015 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8556065.stm.

216. Electoral Geography 2.0, Iraq Legislative Election 2005 (December). Accessed 8 May 2015 at: http://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/countries/i/iraq/iraq-legislative-election-2005.html. According to the Electoral Geography 585,249 votes were cast of 677,821 registered voters for 86.4 percent of the vote.

217. Colonel John L. Gronski, *2/28 BCT Goes to War*. Also; Gronski telephone discussion with Dr. William Knarr, 8 May 2015.

218. Kenneth Katzman, *Iraq: Politics, Elections and Benchmarks*, Congressional Research Service, RS21968, 1 July 2010, p.1, 10. Some were extremely disappointed that Al Anbar did not attain the number of seats in the Council of Representatives that they thought they deserved. However, that did not seem to discourage them from supporting the January police drive in Ramadi.

219. *The Anbar Anthology, Volume I*, 2009, p. 128, 129.

220. Colonel Deane interview, 12 October 2010. This is an operational level issue, some were moved to Jordan for police training.

221. General MacFarland interview, 13 October 2010; and Lechner e-mail, "Anbar," 16 January 2014.

222. General MacFarland interview, 13 October 2010.

223. Colonel Jurney interview, 3 March 2010.

224. This is documented in much more detail in William Knarr, Dale Alford, Mary Hawkins, et. al., *Al Sahawa—The Awakening Volume I: Al Anbar Province Final Report*, Institute for Defense Analyses, July 2015.

225. Governor Mamoun Sami Rashid, Al Anbar Governor 2005 to 2006, interview with Dr. William Knarr, Colonel Dale Alford, USMC, and Lieutenant Colonel David Graves, USMC, in Ramadi, 7 April 2010.